April 24, 2014

To: Dean Van Galen, Chancellor
116 North Hall
University of Wisconsin-River Falls

From: David P. Rainville, Chair
Faculty Senate
University of Wisconsin-River Falls

Re: UWRF Faculty Senate Resolution 2013-14/1

At the April 9, 2014 meeting of the University of Wisconsin-River Falls Faculty Senate, resolution 2013-14/1 was passed. The motion is forwarded to you for your information.

Resolution to Create a Full-Time Sustainability Coordinator Position

As a campus, a university system, and an institution of higher learning, we face budget cuts at a historic moment of economic and ecological instability. The mandated $1.7 million budget cut coincides with a shortfall in UWRF’s enrollment and retention, occurring in an era of rapidly increasing climate change. Of the many urgent missions for higher education, Sustainability is critical to our campus values; critical to attracting, retaining, and enhancing the employability of our students; and critical to our faculty’s research, scholarship and teaching across the disciplines.

Since its inception in 2007, the St. Croix Institute for Sustainable Community Development (SCISCD) has led the way for campus sustainability efforts, prompting energy audits, influencing the sustainable design of the new University Center, supporting student researchers in sustainability studies, opening an Office of Sustainability, launching an annual faculty development program for infusing sustainability across the curriculum, and linking our campus to the national movement for environmental relevance in academe, AASHE: Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education. Now, we have learned that the St. Croix Institute will be leaving UWRF, and the Office of Sustainability is on the budgetary chopping block.

Therefore, we present this Resolution:
Whereas Sustainability is one of UWRF’s most timely initiatives in an age of climate crisis known as the Anthropocene, and

Whereas the Office of Sustainability and its support of the Sustainability Working Group, the Sustainability Faculty Fellows, the programming of interdisciplinary sustainability events, the various student sustainability organizations (i.e., SALSA: Student Alliance for Local and Sustainable Agriculture; ECOS: Environmental Corps of Sustainability), and faculty scholarship in sustainability studies is essential to preserving the sustainability curriculum, programming, and civic engagement at UWRF, and

Whereas the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System (STARS) recognition awarded to UWRF by AASHE was only recently earned, in 2012, and will be lost without consistent tracking; and

Whereas UWRF is one of only three campuses in the country to track our Greenhouse Gas footprint annually back to 1990; and

Whereas UWRF is one of first 25 charter signatories to the American Colleges & Universities Presidents Climate Commitment (ACUPCC); and

Whereas UWRF is the only university in the nation to have a Carbon Negative Climate Action Plan, which was filed with the ACUPCC, passed by Faculty Senate, signed by Chancellor Van Galen in April, 2012; and

Whereas the Carbon-Negative Action Plan implementation requires the oversight of a Sustainability Coordinator; and

Whereas UWRF offers one of the most substantive Sustainable Campus Community Plans in the country (passed by Faculty Senate & signed by Chancellor Van Galen in April 2012, and available for review on the Faculty Senate website); and

Whereas UWRF is one of few US campuses to have multi-stakeholder Sustainable Community Proclamation signed by Chancellor, Mayor, and School Superintendent of same community; and

Whereas the University Center is a visible presence that signifies UWRF’s commitment to sustainability, articulated through its structural design, its use of lighting and electricity, and in the educational kiosk located across from the Information Desk; and

Whereas the Sustainability Curriculum developed through the Kinnikinnick Project, the annual faculty development program infusing sustainability across the curriculum (now in its fourth year), has produced a 35-course Sustainability Studies curriculum of both new and updated courses across all five colleges at UWRF; and

Whereas Students—their recruitment, retention, graduation, and marketability—are interested in pursuing education that is relevant to their world and their workplace, and
they realize that knowledge of sustainable business practices makes them more competitive candidates on the job market; and,

Whereas, cutting funding from Sustainability at UWRF

- removes the foundation for our campus’ claims to sustainability,
- reduces our ability to attract and retain students,
- delists our campus from visibility through AASHE’s national STARS rating, and
- requires us to remove the multiple affirmations of commitment to Sustainability found all across UWRF’s website and in statements of UWRF’s values—or face challenges to our integrity and our truth-in-advertising to future students; and

Whereas the Sustainability Working Group (SWG) is a standing Committee of Faculty Senate,

Therefore, Let it be Resolved, that UWRF continue the work, the visibility, and the tangible commitment to Sustainability on this campus by creating a full-time Sustainability Coordinator Position, complete with sufficient funding for office space and office operations.

In addition, the following letter was received from the Sustainability Faculty Fellows:
Date: March 26, 2014
To: Faculty Senate
From: Sustainability Faculty Fellows
RE: UWRF Budget and Institutional Commitment to Sustainability

As a campus, a university system, and an institution of higher learning, we face budget cuts at a historic moment of economic and ecological instability. The mandated $1.7 million budget cut coincides with a shortfall in UWRF’s enrollment and retention, occurring in an era of rapidly increasing climate change. Of the many urgent missions for higher education, Sustainability is critical to our campus values; critical to attracting, retaining, and enhancing the employability of our students; and critical to our faculty’s research, scholarship and teaching across the disciplines.

Since its inception in 2007, the St. Croix Institute for Sustainable Community Development (SCISCD) has led the way for campus sustainability efforts, prompting energy audits, influencing the sustainable design of the new University Center, supporting student researchers in sustainability studies, opening an Office of Sustainability, launching an annual faculty development program for infusing sustainability across the curriculum, and linking our campus to the national movement for environmental relevance in academe, AASHE: Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education. Now, we have learned that both the St. Croix Institute and the Office of Sustainability are on the budgetary chopping block.

What does UWRF stand to lose?
1. The Office of Sustainability and its support of the Sustainability Working Group, the Sustainability Faculty Fellows, the programming of interdisciplinary sustainability events, the various student sustainability organizations (i.e., SALSA: Student Alliance for
Local and Sustainable Agriculture; ECOS: Environmental Corps of Sustainability), and faculty scholarship in sustainability studies.

2. The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System (STARS) recognition awarded to UWRF by AASHE in 2012.

3. UWRF is the only university in the nation to have a carbon-negative action plan. "Sustainability is an integral part of our mission, vision and values at UWRF," says Chancellor Dean Van Galen. "Our commitment is evident through such efforts as our participation in the American Colleges and University Presidents' Climate Commitment, participation in STARS, the development of the St. Croix Institute for Sustainable Community Development, and the continued development of sustainability curriculum and programs to educate tomorrow's leaders in state-of-the-art sustainability values, principles, and practices." (see http://www.uwrf.edu/UniversityCommunications/UWRF-Receives-STARS-Silver-Rating-for-Sustainability-Achievements.cfm )

4. The Sustainability Curriculum developed through the Kinnikinnic Project, the annual faculty development program infusing sustainability across the curriculum: to date, with four annual offerings, this program has produced a 35-course Sustainability Studies curriculum of both new and updated courses across all five colleges at UWRF.
   a. Right now, these courses have yet to be uploaded to the Sustainability website with complete descriptions and hotlinks to current schedules. Without continued funding for the Office of Sustainability, there will be no one to make these 35 courses visible to UWRF students interested in taking Sustainability Studies courses.

5. The University Center’s visible presence signifying UWRF’s commitment to sustainability, articulated through its structural design, its use of lighting and electricity, and in the educational kiosk located across from the Information Desk. "University Center is a significant space for all members of the UW River Falls campus community. University Center ultimately endeavors to blend the natural beauty of the outdoor environment with student social space, providing an exciting and multi-functional area with a variety of student engagement opportunities."
   —Gregg Heinselman, Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs (see http://www.uwrf.edu/UniversityCenter/Sustainability/Index.cfm )

6. Students—attraction, retention, graduation, marketability—interested in pursuing education that is relevant to their world and their workplace. As more businesses and corporations acknowledge our climate crisis, employers from Apple to Xerox are making commitments to reduce their carbon footprints by implementing sustainability practices. Students with knowledge of sustainable business practices are more competitive candidates on the job market.
In sum, cutting funding from Sustainability at UWRF
• removes the foundation for our campus’ claims to sustainability,
• reduces our ability to attract and retain students,
• delists our campus from visibility through AASHE’s national STARS rating, and
• requires us to remove the multiple affirmations of commitment to Sustainability, beginning with the educational kiosk in the UC, and including the multiple statements
found all across UWRF’s website and UWRF’s values—or face challenges to our
integrity and our truth-in-advertising to future students.
In making these difficult decisions about budget cuts, we ask that the final voice be given
to those who have a lasting commitment to UWRF as an educational institution, and
whose years of service and future careers on this campus position them as persons most
invested in the outcomes of these budgetary decisions.
Let the University Center stand as a living monument to our values and vision, not as a
vestige of lost aspirations in a time of budget crisis. We ask that funding for a full-time
Sustainability Coordinator be provided, along with adequate office space and office
operating costs. To that end, we have attached a draft position description.

Note: No draft position description was provided.