



State of Wisconsin
2021 - 2022 LEGISLATURE

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2021 ASSEMBLY BILL 703

November 12, 2021 - Introduced by Representatives BEHNKE, EDMING, RAMTHUN, SUBECK and TUSLER, cosponsored by Senators JACQUE and BALLWEG. Referred to Committee on Colleges and Universities.

AUTHORS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

- 1 **AN ACT** *to amend* 20.285 (1) (ar); and *to create* 36.25 (56) of the statutes;
- 2 **relating to:** the University of Wisconsin System freshwater collaborative.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

This bill requires the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System to fund a freshwater collaborative among no more than six UW institutions that has the following purposes: 1) studying the challenge of agriculture water management, including a focus on nutrient runoff, farm policy impacts, and other issues and 2) studying the challenge of water quality and safety, including a focus on treatment, contamination, and other issues. The bill requires the freshwater collaborative to do all of the following to accomplish those purposes: 1) devise new watercentric training programs focused on undergraduates; 2) provide an opportunity for students to participate in a work-study internship program in a state office that coordinates state water policy; 3) provide scholarships and student support to retain and attract new talent; 4) amplify marketing and recruiting relating to Wisconsin's role in freshwater science; 5) enhance workforce development programming; 6) recruit new faculty and staff for training programs, research, and innovation; 7) act as a liaison to the Blue Accounting initiative of the commission created by the Great Lakes basin compact; 8) create a user-friendly dashboard for the public to easily access municipal water quality reports, private well data, and surface water quality information that must be compiled from information from the Public Service Commission, the Department of Health Services, the Department of Natural Resources, campuses of the UW System, the Division of Extension of UW-Madison, and other credible organizations; and 9) divide the state into areas to better

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understand each area's diverse and localized water quality issues and prepare a report on each area's unique water quality challenges, each area's known levels of specific contaminants, and the overall success of state and federal water quality programs in each area.

The bill requires the Board of Regents to establish metrics for determining the success of the freshwater collaborative and submit those metrics to the Joint Committee on Finance. The Board of Regents may expend the moneys appropriated under the bill if JCF does not schedule a meeting to review the metrics. However, if JCF schedules a meeting, the moneys may be expended only after JCF approves or modifies the metrics.

The Board of Regents must appoint a nine-member committee to advise the board on how to allocate the funding among UW institutions. One member is the UW System president or his or her designee. The Board of Regents must appoint two members who are nationally recognized objective experts who have shown expertise in the field of water science. Those two members must be selected from a list of five individuals recommended by the UW System president or his or her designee. The senate majority leader and assembly speaker each appoint two members, with one representing the agricultural industry and the other representing a private sector nonagricultural industry. Finally, the governor appoints two members, with one representing a private sector nonagricultural industry and the other representing a municipal water utility of a second class city with a population of less than 150,000.

The bill also requires the Board of Regents to submit a biennial report to JCF and other legislative committees that shows how funding under the bill is distributed and expended at each UW institution as well as information on demographics and accomplishments of the collaborative.

For further information see the state fiscal estimate, which will be printed as an appendix to this bill.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

1 **SECTION 1.** 20.285 (1) (ar) of the statutes, as created by 2021 Wisconsin Act 58,
2 is amended to read:

3 20.285 (1) (ar) *Freshwater collaborative.* As a continuing appropriation, the
4 amounts in the schedule to provide funding for ~~a~~ the freshwater collaborative under
5 s. 36.25 (56).

6 **SECTION 2.** 36.25 (56) of the statutes is created to read:

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1 36.25 (56) FRESHWATER COLLABORATIVE. (a) From the appropriation under s.
2 20.285 (1) (ar) and subject to par. (c), the board shall, to the extent funding is
3 available under s. 20.285 (1) (ar), fund a freshwater collaborative among no more
4 than 6 institutions that has the following purposes:

5 1. Studying the challenge of agriculture water management, including a focus
6 on nutrient runoff and groundwater contamination, water withdrawal for irrigation,
7 and the impact of water management practices on farm policy, including changes to
8 farm efficiencies, production, and profit margins.

9 2. Studying the challenge of water quality and safety, including a focus on
10 emerging contaminants, effective treatment techniques, nutrient contamination,
11 well contamination, surface water contamination, lead contamination, legacy
12 contamination, and safe drinking water compliance.

13 (b) The freshwater collaborative funded under par. (a) shall do all of the
14 following to accomplish the purposes specified in par. (a):

15 1. Devise new watercentric training programs focused on undergraduates.

16 2. Provide an opportunity for students to participate in a work-study
17 internship program in a state office that coordinates state water policy. The board
18 shall determine the number of credits that students earn in the program.

19 3. Provide scholarships and student support to retain and attract new talent.

20 4. Amplify marketing and recruiting relating to Wisconsin's role in freshwater
21 science.

22 5. Enhance workforce development programming, including internships,
23 research experiences, training institutes, and graduate research.

24 6. Recruit new faculty and staff for training programs, research, and
25 innovation.

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1 7. Act as a liaison to the Great Lakes commission's Blue Accounting initiative,
2 in order to assist the state in meeting its obligations under the Great Lakes basin
3 compact ratified and enacted by chapter 275, laws of 1955.

4 8. As soon as practicable but no later than December 31, 2022, create a
5 user-friendly dashboard for the public to easily access municipal water quality
6 reports, private well data, and surface water quality information that is compiled
7 from information from the public service commission, the department of health
8 services, the department of natural resources, institutions and campuses of the
9 system, the Division of Extension of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and other
10 credible organizations.

11 9. Divide the state into areas for the purpose of better understanding the
12 diverse and localized water quality issues in each area. The number of areas and
13 metrics used to map the areas shall be at the discretion of the freshwater
14 collaborative. As soon as practicable but no later than December 31, 2022, the
15 freshwater collaborative shall prepare a report on the unique water quality
16 challenges in each area, the severity of those challenges, and the known level of
17 specific contaminants in those areas. The report shall also describe the overall
18 success of state and federal water quality programs in each area, including
19 participation in each program, resources spent on each program, and available
20 metrics to determine the success of each program.

21 (c) The board shall establish metrics for determining the success of the
22 freshwater collaborative in accomplishing its purposes. No moneys may be expended
23 from the appropriation under s. 20.285 (1) (ar) unless the board submits the metrics
24 to the joint committee on finance and, within 14 working days after the submittal,
25 the cochairpersons of the committee do not notify the board that the committee has

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1 scheduled a meeting to review the metrics. If, within 14 working days after the
2 submittal, the cochairpersons of the committee notify the board that the committee
3 has scheduled a meeting to review the metrics, no moneys may be expended from the
4 appropriation under s. 20.285 (1) (ar) unless the committee approves or modifies the
5 metrics.

6 (d) The board shall appoint a committee to advise the board on how to allocate
7 the funding under par. (a) among the institutions. The committee shall consist of the
8 following:

- 9 1. The president of the system or his or her designee.
- 10 2. Two members appointed by the board who are nationally recognized
11 objective experts who have shown expertise in the field of water science. The 2
12 members shall be selected from a list of 5 individuals recommended by the president
13 of the system or his or her designee.
- 14 3. Two members appointed by the majority leader of the senate. One of the
15 members shall represent the agricultural industry, and the other member shall
16 represent a private sector nonagricultural industry.
- 17 4. Two members appointed by the speaker of the assembly. One of the members
18 shall represent the agricultural industry, and the other member shall represent a
19 private sector nonagricultural industry.
- 20 5. Two members appointed by the governor. One of the members shall
21 represent a private sector nonagricultural industry, and the other member shall
22 represent a municipal water utility of a 2nd class city with a population of less than
23 150,000.

24 (e) No later than December 31 of each odd-numbered year, the board shall
25 submit a report to the joint committee on finance and to the chief clerk of each house

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1 of the legislature for distribution under s. 13.172 (3) to the standing committees
2 having jurisdiction over matters regarding the University of Wisconsin System or
3 natural resources. The report shall show the amount of the funding under par. (a)
4 that is distributed to each institution and show how those amounts compare to the
5 amounts requested, if any, by each institution. The report shall also describe all of
6 the following:

7 1. How the funding is expended, including the number and types of positions
8 created.

9 2. Freshwater collaborative demographics, including the number of resident,
10 nonresident, undergraduate, and graduate students who participate in the
11 collaborative.

12 3. The accomplishments of the freshwater collaborative, including the type and
13 number of degrees conferred, research projects completed, and internships provided
14 under the collaborative.

15 (END)