February 23, 2016

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator
717 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-49005

Dear Senator Baldwin:

Although the ink on the FY2016 Federal Omnibus has dried, we want to thank you for helping to ensure that $5 million was appropriated for capacity-building grants for Non-Land Grant Colleges of Agriculture and Natural Resources. This program, as you know, expands the capacity of the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and sister institutions across the country to engage in research, education and outreach focused on agriculture and natural resources – arguably one of the most significant parts of the Wisconsin and American economies.

We want you to know that UW System institutions have been very successful in securing our share of these competitive funds. UW-River Falls was awarded grant funding for four projects totaling $1.5 million. One grant is building strategies to improve the reproductive performance of the U.S. beef cattle industry. Another grant is to study capital investment decisions and industry structure on Wisconsin dairy farms. With more than 10,000 dairy farms in the state, this is an important investment that will help quantify risks and investment decisions for current and future dairy operations across Wisconsin.

UW-Platteville has received more than $1 million in funding to support education, research and outreach involving long-term agro-ecosystems in the upper Mississippi River Basin, closing the gap in monitoring and on-farm production agriculture systems. Funding is being used to establish the Pioneer Undergraduate Research and Commodities Education (PURCE) laboratory, in addition to a new project examining the ecological impacts of grazing and confinement dairy livestock management systems on agriculture ecosystems. In addition, UW-Stevens Point plans to enter the competition in the April 2016 grant cycle.

This newly developed competition benefits Wisconsin in several ways, including:

- Support for faculty to conduct critical research and develop programming in agriculture;
- Development of youth summer campus and workforce development for middle school, high school, and college-age students underrepresented in STEM and agriculture;

• Funding for undergraduate students to participate in internships, research, and travel to present their findings to a broader audience and gain industry experience;
• Funding for cutting-edge equipment, materials, and supplies to enhance classroom teachings and prepare students for the workforce with the labor skills industry is demanding;
• Creation of educational courses and access to tools for Wisconsin farmers to improve production and enhance environmental and financial decisions;
• Strengthening of curriculum and classroom offerings for students; and
• Enhancement of relationships with business and industry, UW-Extension, local youth science groups, and other colleges and universities across the country.

Thank you again for your support of this highly-valued and important program. We are grateful for your efforts on behalf of the University of Wisconsin System, its institutions and students.

Sincerely,

Ray Cross
President

cc: Board of Regents of the UW System
Chancellor Dennis J. Shields
Chancellor Dean Van Galen
Chancellor Bernie L. Patterson
Dean Mike Compton
Dean Dale Gallenberg
Dean Christine Thomas