

**Profile of the
Department of Animal and Food Science
University of Wisconsin–River Falls
2017 Regents Teaching Excellence Program Award Recipient**

Highlights from nomination materials:

- The Department of Animal and Food Science (AFS), chaired by Dr. Gary Onan, currently houses undergraduate programs in Animal Science, Dairy Science, and Food Science and Technology; Animal Science is the largest undergraduate program at UW-River Falls, with individual emphases in Equine, Meat Animals, Veterinary Technology, and Companion Animals.
- The AFS department has over 730 student majors with approximately 50 student advisees for each full-time teaching faculty and staff member.
- The department has a program of evaluation and mentoring that benefits new faculty members as they develop and refine their teaching philosophies and practices; specific activities include peer-visiting of classes, ongoing feedback from the chair, and promotion of professional development opportunities for all faculty, especially newer faculty; department faculty and staff have received numerous teaching awards and recognitions at the college and university levels, as well as within their professional societies and beyond; nine faculty members in the department have earned the UW-River Falls Distinguished Teacher Award.
- To meet the changing demographics of students, in particular the increasing percentage coming from non-farm backgrounds, the department recently undertook an intense curriculum review; as part of this review process, the department held face-to-face listening sessions in which faculty members engaged with business owners, state and agricultural officials, sectors of government, and recent and past graduates to determine the effectiveness of curricular offerings. The department is using the results to focus improvements to specific areas, including exposing students to meaningful laboratory experiences with animals earlier in their academic careers and increasing student exposure to career opportunities within animal industries.
- The Dairy Science program has one of the highest freshman retention rates of any individual program at the university.
- The department's faculty and staff are committed to recruiting, such as at county fairs and facilities tours, to inform students about the many rewarding opportunities in animal science agriculture.
- The department is helping develop and lead efforts in China, Nicaragua, and Brazil for students, faculty, and staff, partly in response to growing collaboration with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

In the words of colleagues:

- “The programs in the AFS department are well-respected with consistently high student evaluations for most instructors across the curricula. Further, the department places a high value on co-curricular activities such as clubs and organizations, as well as judging teams and other intercollegiate competitions....These opportunities for students to practice what they are learning in the classroom and ‘extending theory to practice’ are vital to engagement and success.”—*Faye Perkins, Interim Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, UW-River Falls*

In the words of a graduate:

- “When I meet young men and women interested in agriculture, I make sure to give them a friendly nudge towards an education at UW-River Falls. The Animal and Food Science Department is diverse across many areas of agriculture, the quality of instruction is exceptional, yet the college and program is intimate enough to give each student individual attention.”—*Laura Olenski, DVM*