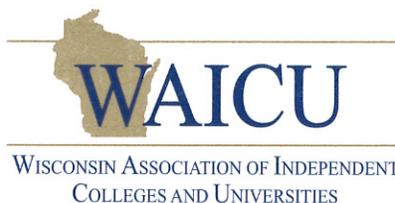


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Senate Committee on Universities and Technical Colleges

August 28, 2013

TESTIMONY

Senate BILL 229

By

Dr. Rolf Wegenke, President

Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities

Chair Harsdorf and members of the Committee, my name is Rolf Wegenke. I am the President of the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, or WAICU, representing the 23 private, nonprofit colleges and universities in Wisconsin and their more than 61,000 students.

I am speaking in support of SB 229 which relates to the Talent Incentive Program, or TIP, grants administered by Higher Educational Aids Board, or HEAB. SB 229 allows HEAB to award a TIP Grant to a fully-qualified student for up to ten semesters whether or not that enrollment is continuous. This would ensure that the rules for TIP grants are the same as those for other HEAB grants.

I am grateful that this bill has bipartisan sponsors including 21 legislators.

I was a member of the 2012 Commission on Financial Aid Consolidation and Modernization as were Senator Fred Risser and Representative Joan Ballweg, sponsors of SB 229 and its companion bill, AB 260. Among the recommendations of the Commission was *"The Commission endorses passage of legislation comparable to 2011 Assembly Bill 142, a product of the 2010 interim study committee, which would allow student recipients of the Talent Incentive Grant to continue receiving the grant through a discontinuous enrollment as is done for other HEAB grant programs."* SB 229 accomplishes this goal of the 2012 Commission.

The TIP Grant funds Wisconsin resident students attending Wisconsin's public or private, nonprofit colleges and universities. First-time freshman students are nominated by their financial aid offices or by counselors of the Wisconsin Educational Opportunities Program. HEAB reports that in 2011-12 there were over 3,400 students at UW, WTCS, and WAICU awarded TIP Grants. The awards totaled over \$2.6 million.

Wisconsin's other major student aid programs do not require consecutive semesters of enrollment, although they do cap the overall number of semesters of eligibility, as does TIP. This bill amends the TIP

Grant eligibility requirements to make them similar to the Higher Educational Aids Board's other grant programs by allowing a fully-qualified student to receive TIP for up to ten semesters which could be discontinuous. Wisconsin needs more college graduates. Reality happens. These fully-qualified Wisconsin students may need to "stop out" in their college career to earn additional money for tuition or for their families. The state should not penalize them for being responsible. The state, by allowing this flexibility, protects its investment by helping assure that students who "stop out" can pick up their college career where they left off and, ultimately, graduate. Changing the eligibility requirements will have no impact on increasing the costs of the program.

WAICU's mission, "Wisconsin's private, nonprofit colleges working together to advance educational opportunity" is exemplified in state student financial aid targeted toward fully-qualified, low-income, first-generation, or minority students. I am grateful that in 2013 Act 20, the biennial budget act, the Legislature and Governor ensured that student financial aid remained stable and, for one year only, increased both the WHEG-Wisconsin Technical College Grant and the Wisconsin Tuition Grant to address the challenges facing Wisconsin students. While over 61,000 students received one of HEAB's major grants, fully 76,000 qualified and eligible students were turned away for lack of funding. These are Wisconsin students attending a Wisconsin college or university who, without help, cannot achieve their or the state's educational goals. Sustaining and increasing those funds are the only way many students attending two- and four-year institutions can stay in school. Ensuring that the TIP Grant can be used as all other HEAB grants are will go one step farther, in a cost-effective manner, to assist these Wisconsin citizens.



Bill Position
Board of Regents - University of Wisconsin System
2013-14 Legislative Session

Senate Bill 229

Talent Incentive Program Grants

LEGISLATION

Senate Bill 229

Under current law, the Higher Educational Aids Board (HEAB) awards Talent Incentive Program (TIP) grants to uniquely needy students enrolled at public and private nonprofit institutions of higher education in the state. Currently, HEAB may not award a TIP grant to the same student for more than 10 consecutive semesters. In addition, under both state statutes (§39.435(2), Wis. Stats.) and administrative rules promulgated by HEAB, a student must maintain continuous enrollment to remain eligible for a talent incentive grant.

This bill provides that a student need not maintain continuous enrollment to remain eligible for a TIP grant. Under the bill, HEAB may award a TIP grant to the same student for up to 10 semesters, whether or not consecutive, but may not award a grant to the same student more than six years after the initial grant is awarded to that student.

Introduced: July 9, 2013

Referred to: Senate Committee on Universities and Technical Colleges

Public hearing scheduled: August 28, 2013

UW SYSTEM POSITION

SUPPORT:

SB 229 is similar to 2011 AB 142, which was based upon recommendations from the [Joint Legislative Council Special Committee on Review of Higher Education Financial Aid Programs](#), a bi-partisan committee of higher education leaders that included UW financial aid experts. That bill was passed unanimously by the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities on a 10-0 vote but failed to advance further before the legislative session adjourned.

Like the previous bill, SB 229 maintains eligibility for student recipients of Talent Incentive Program (TIP) grants who may have to stop-out and re-enroll.

While it is a relatively small change to the program, it is essential to those students who for some reason, such as a health concern or a family crisis, may have to change their educational plans.

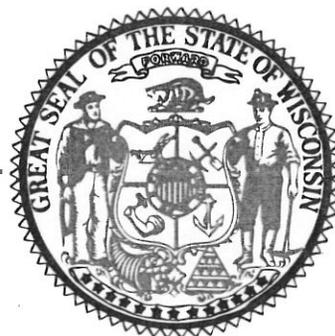
This bill provides that, so long as they continue to meet financial and other qualifications, students will remain eligible to receive grants for up to 10 semesters during a six-year period.

The UW Board of Regents supports this legislation. It is consistent with previous efforts to reduce barriers to college, improve affordability, and modernize financial aid programs.

FRED A. RISSER

Wisconsin State Senator

August 28, 2013



Senator Sheila Harsdorf, Chair
Senate Committee on Universities and Technical Colleges
12 West, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Chairperson Harsdorf,

Thank you Chairperson Harsdorf, and committee members for holding a hearing on Senate Bill 229 which relates to enrollment requirements for recipients of talent incentive grants. I coauthored this legislation with Representative Joan Ballweg. She has introduced companion legislation in the Assembly.

Under current law, the Higher Education Grants Board awards Talent Incentive Grants to uniquely needy students enrolled at the state's public and private colleges and universities. However, unlike most other HEAB programs, Talent Incentive Grant recipients are required to maintain continuous enrollment to remain eligible for the grant.

Senate Bill 229 responds to a concern raised by the Higher Education Grants Board and provides grant recipients with the option to take a semester or year off from their studies and still remain eligible for the talent incentive grant.

There are a number of reasons why a student may need to take a break from their studies including a health concern, caring for a family member or a family crisis, or simply needing to work to save money to continue their education. It is important to note that this bill does not change the current requirements that limit a student's eligibility for the grant to 10 semesters during a 6 year period.

Senate Bill 229 is the result of the Joint Legislative Council Study Committee on Review of Higher Education Financial Aid Programs and was also recommend by the 2012 Commission on Financial Aid Consolidation and Modernization. I served as a legislative member of that Commission as did Rep. Ballweg.

I appreciate your willingness to schedule this measure for a public hearing. It is a good, common sense bill and I encourage the committee to look favorably upon this important legislation. Please feel free to contact me directly with any questions or concerns.

Most Sincerely,


FRED A. RISSER
Wisconsin State Senate

FAR:tet

Cc: Senate Committee on Universities and Technical Colleges

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41ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

SB 229: Enrollment requirements for recipients of talent incentive grants
Testimony of State Representative Joan Ballweg
Senate Committee on Universities and Technical Colleges
August 28, 2013

Thank you, Chairman Harsdorf, and members of the committee for hearing Senate Bill 229 today.

This bill makes a change to the Talent Incentive Grant Program, which is administered by the Higher Educational Aids Board (HEAB) and provides grants to uniquely needy students attending colleges and universities in the state. SB 229 specifies that grant recipients will not be automatically disqualified because they fail to maintain continuous enrollment in their higher education institutions. Instead, it provides that grant recipients will be eligible to receive the grants for up to 10 semesters during a six-year period.

The legislation responds to a concern raised by HEAB that students receiving financial aid through the program currently may lose their grants if they miss a semester or year of school. Under current law, those students must apply for a waiver to retain eligibility, and although they are regularly approved, this change makes commonsense.

This extension is not meant to slow down a student's time to completion. Rather, we know from experience that economically and educationally disadvantaged students are the most likely to need breaks during their college careers. Whether they are taking time off to work in order to save money, or to care for a family member, by extending the time they are eligible for this grant we are helping to ensure those students will return to the classroom.

SB 229 was introduced last session as 2011 AB 142. It was the result of the Joint Legislative Council Study Committee on Review of Higher Education Financial Aid Programs and was also recommended by the 2012 Commission on Financial Aid Consolidation and Modernization.

Thank you for your time, if you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact my office or myself.