

JERRY PETROWSKI

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

Senate Bill 891

February 10, 2022

Good morning Mr. Chairman and committee members and thank you for taking the time to hear Senate Bill 891 setting the framework for a joint venture by UW-Stout, North Central Technical College, and UW Stevens Point to provide UW-Stout's Manufacturing Engineering Program in Wausau.

This bill is before you today in response to a rapidly growing need for qualified professionals at manufacturing facilities in Marathon County and the surrounding region. According to a 2020 study conducted by the University Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA), there were 1,473 postings related to Manufacturing Engineering occupations from January, 2019 through December, 2019 in the Wausau region. In the Wausau metro area alone (Wausau, Rothschild, and Schofield), there were 596 manufacturing engineering vacancies during the same period.

To be able to retain businesses in our region, our manufacturers need this program to provide a qualified workforce that will allow them to stay in the area. By the same token, our communities need to be able to offer young people promising careers that will give them a reason to stay in or come to the area.

Recognizing this very real need, North Central Technical College and UW-Stout and Stevens Point have come together and worked in collaboration to make this program a reality. Serving on this committee I expect you have some idea how challenging that might be, but they have worked together to find a way and now they need us to do the same.

The passage of this bill will not complete the efforts needed in this building to make this program happen. The bill takes effect July 1, 2023 at the start of the next budget. To make the program work we will need to provide \$2.54 million to cover costs for laboratory upgrades and maintenance, and for faculty and support staff. In the meantime, having the framework in place in the statutes will help the three schools move forward with their planned implementation.

We have several people here today from the respective schools and the business community who have come to speak in support of the bill, so in the interest of time I would simply thank you for hearing SB 891 today and ask for your support of the bill moving forward. I would be happy to answer any questions.

29TH SENATE DISTRICT



PATRICK SNYDER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 85th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 891

Senate Committee on Universities and Technical Colleges

February 10th, 2022

Chairman Roth and members of the Committee:

Thank you for taking the time to allow me to testify today.

This legislation was drafted in conjunction with University of Wisconsin (UW) System and other stakeholders to require the Board of Regents to expand the manufacturing engineering program and engineering technology program at UW-Stout to allow collaboration with UW-Stevens Point and Northcentral Technical College (NTC).

There is a significant shortages of engineers in northcentral Wisconsin. A 2020 study conducted by the University Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA), found 1,473 postings related to Manufacturing Engineering occupations from January, 2019 through December, 2019 in the Wausau region. In the Wausau metro area alone (Wausau, Rothschild, and Schofield), there were 596 manufacturing engineering vacancies during the same period.

This partnership will create additional pathways for students to pursue careers in engineering and open opportunities for those studying in Wausau – especially for nontraditional students by opening a pathway for NTC students to obtain a degree in engineering technology. Not only is this legislation in the best interests of students but is strongly supported by the business community of Marathon County and other stakeholders.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.



Office of Government Relations

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DATE: February 10, 2022

TO: Members of the Senate Committee on Universities and Technical Colleges

FROM: Tommy G. Thompson, UW System Interim President

RE: Written Testimony on Senate Bill 891

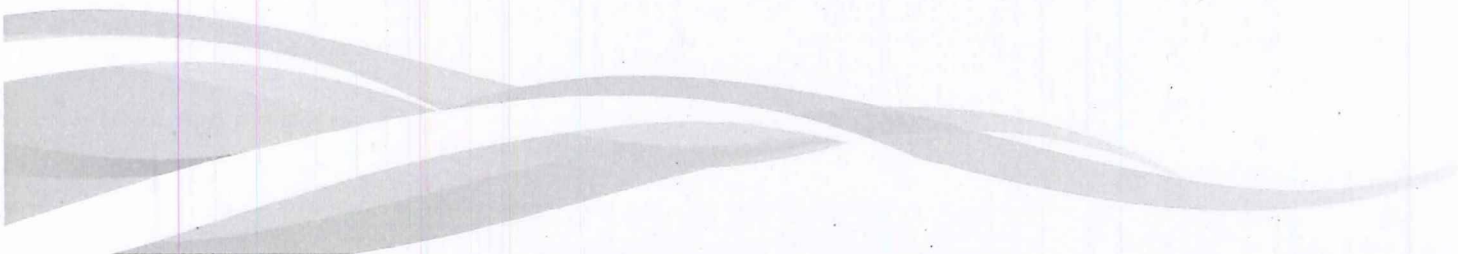
Thank you, Chair Roth, and committee members, for providing the UW System (UWS) an opportunity to submit written testimony on Senate Bill 891 (SB 891). We are thankful to Senator Petrowski and Representative Snyder, the authors of this legislation, for addressing a strong desire by the Wausau community to increase access to engineering programs.

As part of Wausau's desire to grow, they have invested time, energy, and resources into developing a 10-year strategic plan that will guide their progress. One of the main goals addressed by the plan is to attract skilled workers and talented individuals to the region. We are pleased that they have recognized UW System as a valuable partner in this effort to develop the local workforce.

This legislation supports the strong partnership developed between UWS, the Wausau community, and Northcentral Technical College (NTC) to enhance and grow the region. The bill before you today would expand UW-Stout's Manufacturing Engineering and Engineering Technology program to UW-Stevens Point at Wausau. There is incredible market demand for engineers in the region and across our state. Wausau boasts industry-leading companies that not only need engineers but are ready to invest in individuals willing to pursue these degrees.

This is the Wisconsin Idea in action. This legislation will bring together multiple parties and address a critical need for the community. Further, it will help enhance the lives of the students that participate in the program, benefit employment opportunities for local industry, and generate growth and innovation for the region.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on this legislation.



Collaborative Engineering Program Testimony
Senate Bill 891

My name is Glendalí Rodríguez and I am the Chief Academic Officer/Provost at UW-Stout.

Thank you, Chair Roth and committee members, for the opportunity to speak today in support of Senate Bill 891, which would establish collaborative engineering programs at the University of Wisconsin-Stout and University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. Specifically, the two collaborative engineering programs are Manufacturing Engineering and Engineering Technology.

As Wisconsin's only polytechnic university, UW-Stout has many long-standing engineering programs, including Manufacturing Engineering and Engineering Technology. In addition, with more than 85 transfer agreements, we have a strong record of partnership with universities within the UW System and two-year technical colleges within Wisconsin.

In June 2018, the Greater Wausau Chamber of Commerce and community stakeholders engaged TIP Strategies, an Austin-based economic development consulting firm, in the creation of the Greater Wausau Region Economic Development Strategic Plan. The plan is comprised of actions and strategies, centered around Talent, Innovative Companies, and Placemaking goals, to guide the Greater Wausau Region's growth and competitiveness. Several high priority action items will help achieve these goals and include offering UW-Stout's Manufacturing Engineering and Engineering Technology Program in Wausau. The Greater Wausau Prosperity Partnership (GWPP - an initiative of the Greater Wausau Chamber of Commerce) has since been established to help lead the implementation and execution of this 5-year road map.

There exists a strong desire and support for offering UW-Stout's engineering programs in Wausau. According to a 2020 study conducted by the University Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA), there were 1,473 postings related to Manufacturing Engineering occupations from January 2019 through December 2019 in the Wausau region. In the Wausau metro area alone (Wausau, Rothschild, and Schofield), there were 596 manufacturing engineering

vacancies during the same period. Manufacturers in the region are experiencing significant shortages of manufacturing engineers and Wausau area employers (including those in the cities of Wausau, Stevens Point, Wisconsin Rapids, Plover, Schofield, Marshfield, Medford, Rothschild, Shawano, and Tomahawk) strongly support offering UW-Stout's engineering programs in Wausau as a solid "brain gain" strategy.

With an infusion of resources necessary to support additional personnel and infrastructure, UW-Stout's high-demand and mature engineering degrees could be offered successfully in the region through collaboration among UW-Stout, UW-Stevens Point, Northcentral Technical College (NTC), and area employers and community members. Local students enrolling in UW-Stout's Engineering Programs would take their first two years of coursework in the Wausau area, as part of attaining an associate degree in pre-engineering at UW-Stevens Point at Wausau or Manufacturing Engineering Technology at Northcentral Technical College. Students would then take their final two years of courses from UW-Stout faculty using UW-Stevens Point and NTC's laboratory facilities. In adherence to UW-Stout's distinct mission as Wisconsin's only polytechnic university, graduates from UW-Stout's Manufacturing Engineering program will have a hands-on, operational understanding of Industry 4.0 and will be able to provide engineering design capabilities to Wausau area manufacturers seeking to automate their production facilities using the latest technologies, robotics, material handling systems, control systems, and integrated communications. UW-Stout's 98% placement rate within six months of graduation remains unsurpassed in both the UW System and Wisconsin Technical College System, and with the demand for well-qualified graduates in the area, we are confident that we will continue to excel in this regard.

We thank Senator Petrowski and Representative Snyder for bringing this legislation forth, and we welcome this opportunity to expand our engineering program to further benefit Wisconsin. Thank you. I welcome any questions.