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Contact: Rep. Dianne Hesselbein 608-266-5340

Berceau, Hesselbein Request Public  
Hearing on Campus Budget Cuts

MADISON- In the most recent state budget, Gov. Scott Walker and Legislative Republicans imposed a drastic \$250 million cut on Wisconsin's public colleges and universities. Since that time, campuses throughout the state have created and enacted plans in an attempt to absorb these cuts and blunt their worst effects.

The University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents meeting agenda for April 7 and 8 originally included presentations from the chancellor of each campus on how they would implement their share of the budget cuts. However, in a surprise decision, the Board cancelled these presentations.

Following this announcement, Reps. Terese Berceau (D-Madison) and Dianne Hesselbein (D-Middleton), members of the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities, wrote a letter to committee chair Rep. Dave Murphy (R-Greenville) requesting a public hearing for the chancellors to make their presentations. Copies of the letter were sent to Republican committee members Reps. Robert Brooks, Mike Rohrkaste, Romaine Quinn, Jessie Rodriguez, Warren Petryk, Joan Ballweg, Scott Krug, Travis Tranel and John Macco and Democratic committee members Reps. Andy Jorgensen, Jill Billings and Dana Wachs.

In the letter, Berceau and Hesselbein wrote, "As you are aware, the Regents recently made the surprise decision to cancel presentations scheduled to be given at their meeting this week by chancellors from each UW campus. The presentations were to explain how each campus is implementing its share of the \$250 million in budget cuts handed down by Governor Walker and Republicans in the Legislature."

The letter continues, "You are also aware of the critical governing role that the Regents play in the operations of these campuses, and the opportunity that their meeting presented to keep taxpayers apprised of how their taxes are being spent. There is not a comparable opportunity that is open to the public to learn, from the chancellors, how they are dealing with these harmful cuts . . . Therefore, as members of the Committee, we request that the Committee hold a public hearing as soon as practicable to hear from the chancellors on this topic."

"Stories in the media have indicated that these presentations were cancelled so as to not overdramatize the extent of these cuts, especially at a time when legislators are campaigning for office," Berceau said. "These massive cuts are having a devastating impact on campuses throughout the state, slowly degrading our state's great higher education system.

"This cancellation smacks of public relations spin and damage control, not any effort to help campuses throughout the state," Hesselbein said. "We were elected to watch out for the taxpayers' investment, and immediate public hearings are needed so we are able to do our jobs."

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