

FISC UPDATE

Meeting the Needs of Wisconsin's Agribusiness Industry



Rachel Zwieg, WALSA Board Member

Those aware of the UW–Madison Farm and Industry Short Course (FISC) program closure, are probably wondering what update is available. FISC alumni who are unaware, UW–Madison closed the traditional FISC program in 2023; FISC was last offered in 2022. You may ask how I am able to provide an update for a program that no longer exists. Well, UW–River Falls saw a need and started their own FISC program in 2023.

In 2023, UW–River Falls enrolled nine students and offered a dairy only curriculum. Because the program was new, it was not accredited making students ineligible for scholarships or financial aid. After a few years of development, the program has gained momentum with sixteen students currently signed up and registration remaining open until the second week of October. Expansion plans include adding beef courses and more agronomy courses as the program budget and student interests expand. The program continues as a 14-week class with hands-on experience. Students are encouraged to be part of student organizations and activities. In addition to the curriculum, students now begin the program with a four day ag tour across the Midwest. This tour includes stops at both UW–Platteville and UW–Madison. In addition, the program has partnered with Professional Dairy Producers (PDP) to encourage the students to attend their business conference and enroll in the programs they offer.

My personal favorite activity is that UW–Madison welcomed UW–River Falls students to Ag Forward. This visit during winter



UW-RF FISC

break shares UW–Madison knowledge and resources. During this time, FISC alumni join students for lunch to network. I have enjoyed my time getting to know the next generation of farmers and learning what their experiences have been in FISC. In 2026, FISC is offering two separate visits; one in October and one in December. If anyone has an interest in meeting with current students during this time please feel free to reach out or look for more information on the UW–Madison FISC website.



FISC @ UW

UW–Madison has maintained a FISC website since the college has continued to offer courses like Ag Forward to those interested in a specified field. UW–Madison currently offers a Beekeeping Short Course and is continually working to identify and develop additional short courses to meet the needs of Wisconsin's agribusiness community.

FISC was an important stepping stone for my husband and me in our farming journey. To learn that my children were not going to have that option was heart breaking for me. They may not be able to experience trekking down the hills, walking to State Street, or going to a Badger Hockey game. But, I hope they are able to make the connections with students that become so important down the road, or gain knowledge that will be the basis of their success. I am glad to see the UW–River Falls program is gaining momentum, and I wish them nothing but luck and success to both the university and the students.