

UW-River Falls Fund-Raising Effort For Dairy Pilot Plant Reaches \$1 Million

River Falls, WI—The fund-raising effort to renovate the University of Wisconsin-River Falls (UWRF) Dairy Pilot Plant has reached \$1 million, one-third of its goal.

Launched in June 2013, the fund-raising effort is looking to collect \$3 million in private contributions to update and upgrade equipment in the plant. UWRF will also seek to secure an additional \$500,000 in institutional and state funding for renovation and modernization.

The UWRF facility gives undergraduate students the opportunity to work in a dairy plant production environment and participate in new product development, testing and marketing, production and retail.

Major donations have been received from the Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association; Grassland Dairy; Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery; Welcome Dairy; Loos Machine; Mullins Cheese; and Foremost Farms USA.

These organizations are the first seven of 20 possible members on the Dairy Plant Advisory Committee, which will receive benefits like priority recruitment access to UWRF graduates, the opportunity to advise on plant renovation designs and program development, and access to the facility for research, courses and workshops.

The dairy pilot plant first opened in 1982 and has been making popular retail products like cheese and ice cream for students, staff and the community ever since. Today, more than 20 cheeses and 30 different flavors of ice cream are made by UWRF students with milk from UWRF's Mann Valley Farm.

Modernization efforts will keep the plant relevant to the region's growing dairy processing industry, and help meet demands for experienced graduates.

"UW-River Falls competes with many other schools of higher learning from across the US, so upgrading the pilot plant sends a statement that we are here to retain and train our next generation of dairy leaders in Wisconsin," said Tayt Wuethrich, vice president/owner of Grassland Dairy Products.

"This transformational renovation of the Dairy Pilot Plant is a high priority project for the university," said UWRF Chancellor Dean Van Galen. "The renovation will modernize our facilities, expand our capacity to support business and industry and enable us to provide high-quality hands-on experiences to a new generation of leaders in Wisconsin's signature industry."

"The demand for trained dairy processing and product development personnel will continue to

grow in the future," said Dave Fuhrmann, president of Foremost Farms USA. "Foremost Farms will look to UWRF for qualified candidates for the positions we'll have open in the future."

The plant is also an important component of academic programming in the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (CAFES), which is reinforcing its emphasis on teaching in-demand disciplines like food technology, processing and plant management.

A new faculty member will soon be hired in food and process engineering, and a new minor created in food processing technology.

CAFES wants to ensure we have a modern, well-equipped plant with processing capacity relevant to the industry which will give our students direct, hands-on experience and provide for expanded outreach training and programming, said CAFES dean Dale Gallenberg.

The plant also serves a vital role in outreach and applied research, according to WCMA executive director John Umhoefer.

"Four of the five basic courses required for the Wisconsin Cheesemaker's license are taught at UWRF, along with opportunities for cheese maker apprenticeships and short courses for industry personnel and students to earn their pasteurizer license," Umhoefer said.

Renovation is scheduled to start in summer 2015 with occupancy of the space to be January 2016.

Renovation fund-raising is part of UWRF's larger \$20 million Rising to Distinction comprehensive campaign, which has raised more than \$14 million to date.

The project will include an overall modernization of both equipment and processes, and an increase in space – bringing the facility from 1,600 square feet to 6,000 square feet. This allows for the separation of raw product handling and whey processing, as well as creation of independently functioning spaces for cheese and ice cream production.

Space will be added for raw milk processing and separation, along with increased HTST capacity, additional cheese vats, and a cheese aging room.

An improved ice cream manufacturing space will feature temperature control, updated processing equipment, and separate raw and pasteurized processing areas. A classroom/training area overlooking the cheese processing space will also be added.

"This renovation project will ensure the university's relevancy in the dairy industry with regards to education and training, while introducing state of the art processing, food safety and bio-security



The Central Wisconsin Cheese Makers & Butter Makers Association (CWCBA) announced last week that it will donate \$25,000 to the renovation of the University of River Falls' (UWRF) Dairy Pilot Plant. Kim Heiman of Nasonville Dairy and president of CWCBA, stands with Michelle Farner, UWRF's dairy pilot plant manager; Jim Mildbrand, treasurer of the CWCBA; and Dale Gallenberg, dean, College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences at UWRF.

features," said Dairy Pilot Plant manager Michelle Farner.

UWRF students have the unique opportunity to work in the plant and gain experience that makes them immediately valuable in the industry upon graduating, said Jim Mildbrand, secretary-treasurer of the Central Wisconsin Cheesemakers and Buttermakers Association (CWCBA) and a member of the steering committee providing oversight for the fund-raising project.

"This important renovation project will help ensure that students continue to get relevant academic preparation and hands-on training in dairy product processing," Mildbrand continued.

In demonstrating its commitment, CWCBA approved a \$25,000 gift for the project on Feb. 18.

For more details on the dairy plant renovation, visit go.uwrf.edu/dairyplant or contact Dean Gallenberg at (715) 425-3784.

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