State of Wisconsin
2025 - 2026 LEGISLATURE

LRB-5245/1
ARG:emw

2025 ASSEMBLY BILL 669

November 19, 2025 - Introduced by Representatives PIWOWARCZYK, BEHNKE, CALLAHAN, DITTRICH, GOEBEN, GREEN, B. JACOBSON, KNODL, MELOTIK, MURPHY, MURSAU, NEDWESKI, O'CONNOR, PENTERMAN, TUCKER and WICHGERS, cosponsored by Senators WIMBERGER, NASS, QUINN and TOMCZYK. Referred to Committee on Colleges and Universities.

AUTHORS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

AN ACT ***to repeal*** 36.34 (title) and (1) (title) and (a), 38.04 (8) (a), 38.26 (1), 39.15 (1) (c), 39.44 (1) (a) and 39.46 (2) (g); ***to renumber and amend*** 36.34 (1) (b), 38.04 (8) (b), 39.26 and 39.44 (1) (b); ***to amend*** 36.25 (14), 36.25 (14m) (title), 36.25 (14m) (a), 36.25 (14m) (b), 36.25 (14m) (c) 2., 38.04 (8) (title), 38.26 (title), 38.26 (2) (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e), 38.27 (1) (a), 39.40 (title), 39.40 (2) (intro.), 39.40 (3) (b) 1. and 39.44 (3) (c); ***to repeal and recreate*** 39.40 (1) and 39.44 (title); ***to create*** 36.05 (6r), 38.01 (4m) and 39.26 (2) of the statutes; **relating to:** race-based higher education programs and requirements.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

This bill changes certain race-based programs or requirements in higher education. In general, the bill modifies these programs and requirements so they apply to disadvantaged students rather than minority students. Under the bill, the term "disadvantaged," with respect to a student, means having experienced any unfavorable economic, familial, geographic, physical, or other personal hardship. The term may be further defined by rule but may not include the consideration of 1) a student's race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or religion or

2) a student's identity as a member of a group without regard to individual qualities.

HIGHER EDUCATIONAL AIDS BOARD

Minority teacher loan program

Under current law, the Higher Educational Aids Board administers a minority teacher loan program for minority students who meet certain criteria, including being enrolled in a teaching program in a discipline with teacher shortages. A "minority student" is defined as a student who is a Black American; an American Indian or Alaskan native; a Hispanic; a person of Asian or Pacific Island origin; or a person whose ancestry includes two or more races. Under the program, HEAB may award to an eligible student a loan of up to $10,000 per year for not more than three years. The loan is generally repayable, but HEAB must forgive 25 percent of the loan for each school year the loan recipient 1) is employed as a full-time teacher in a high-demand area related to the recipient's discipline; 2) is employed by a public or private school located in a school district in which minority students constitute at least 40 percent of pupil enrollment; and 3) receives an educator effectiveness rating of proficient or distinguished.

The bill changes the program so that it is available to disadvantaged students rather than minority students. The bill also changes the criteria for loan forgiveness described in 2, above, so the recipient must be employed by a public or private school located in a school district in which "economically disadvantaged pupils," defined as pupils eligible for a free or reduced-price lunch, constitute at least 60 percent of pupil enrollment.

Minority undergraduate grants

Under current law, HEAB administers a minority undergraduate retention grant program for minority undergraduates enrolled in private, nonprofit colleges and technical colleges. A "minority undergraduate" is defined as an undergraduate student who is a Black American; an American Indian; a Hispanic; or a person admitted to the United States after December 31, 1975, who is either a former citizen of Laos, Vietnam, or Cambodia or whose ancestor was or is a citizen of Laos, Vietnam, or Cambodia (Hmong). HEAB must evenly distribute program funds to private, nonprofit colleges and technical colleges, and these receiving colleges must award grants to eligible students on the basis of financial need.

The bill changes the program so that it is available to disadvantaged undergraduate students rather than minority undergraduate students.

Minority student enrollment at Medical College of Wisconsin and Marquette University School of Dentistry

Current law provides state funding to the Medical College of Wisconsin, Inc., for certain purposes, but one condition for receiving this funding is that MCW make every effort to ensure that at least 5 percent of its total enrollment consists of minority students.

The bill repeals this requirement.

Current law requires HEAB to facilitate a contract between the state and a private, nonprofit dental school for dental education services. The contract must incorporate certain requirements, including that the dental school make every effort to ensure that at least 5 percent of its total enrollment consists of minority students.

The bill repeals this requirement.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM

Minority and disadvantaged student programs

Current law requires the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System to fund programs for minority and disadvantaged students enrolled in the UW System and programs to recruit minority and disadvantaged students. The Board of Regents must also adopt a recruitment and retention plan for minority and disadvantaged students.

Current law requires the Board of Regents to establish a grant program for minority and disadvantaged graduate students enrolled in the UW System.

The bill modifies these provisions to delete references to the minority status of students, so they apply only to disadvantaged students.

Lawton grants

Current law requires the Board of Regents to establish a grant program for minority undergraduates enrolled in the UW System. The grants are known as Lawton grants. A "minority undergraduate" is defined as an undergraduate student who is a Black American; an American Indian; a Hispanic; or Hmong.

The bill changes the Lawton grant program so that Lawton grants are awarded to disadvantaged undergraduate students rather than minority undergraduate students.

TECHNICAL COLLEGES

Minority student participation and retention plan

Current law requires the Technical College System Board to develop a plan to increase minority group member participation and retention in the Technical College System. The plan must include certain information, including a review of the progress made by the TCS Board and technical colleges in the previous school year. A "minority group member" is defined as a Black, a Hispanic, an American Indian, an Eskimo, an Aleut, a native Hawaiian, an Asian-Indian, or a person of Asian-Pacific origin.

The bill modifies this requirement so that it applies with respect to disadvantaged students rather than minority group members.

Minority student participation and retention grants

Under current law, the TCS Board, upon application by a technical college, may award a grant to the technical college to accomplish specified purposes relating to minority students, including the following: providing counseling and tutoring services for minority students; pursuing innovative approaches to increasing

minority student placement and retention in programs that lead to a high earning potential; providing internships to minority students preparing for transfer to UW System teacher education programs; and recruiting, training, and retaining minority students through the use of community-based organizations. A "minority student" is defined as a student enrolled in a technical college who is a minority group member, as defined above.

The bill changes this grant program so that grants are awarded for programs related to disadvantaged students rather than minority students.

Incentive grants

Under current law, the TCS Board awards incentive grants to technical colleges for specified purposes. One such purpose is the creation or expansion of adult high school, adult basic education, and English as a second language courses. The TCS Board must give priority to courses serving students with disabilities or minority, unemployed, or disadvantaged students.

The bill eliminates the priority for courses serving minority students but does not affect the priority for courses serving students with disabilities or unemployed or disadvantaged students.

For further information see the state and local fiscal estimate, which will be printed as an appendix to this bill.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. 36.05 (6r) of the statutes is created to read:

36.05 **(6r)** (a) Subject to par. (b), "disadvantaged," with respect to a student, means having experienced any unfavorable economic, familial, geographic, physical, or other personal hardship.

(b) The term "disadvantaged" may be further defined by the board by rule, but in doing so, the board may not permit, either directly or indirectly, the consideration of a student's race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or religion or the consideration of a student's identity as a member of a group without regard to individual qualities.

SECTION 2. 36.25 (14) of the statutes is amended to read:

36.25 **(14)** GRADUATE STUDENT FINANCIAL AID. The board shall establish a grant program for ~~minority and~~ disadvantaged graduate students enrolled in the system. The board shall give preference in awarding grants under this subsection to residents of this state. The board may not make a grant under this subsection to a person whose name appears on the statewide support lien docket under s. 49.854 (2) (b), unless the person provides to the board a payment agreement that has been approved by the county child support agency under s. 59.53 (5) and that is consistent with rules promulgated under s. 49.858 (2) (a).

SECTION 3. 36.25 (14m) (title) of the statutes is amended to read:

36.25 **(14m)** (title) ~~MINORITY AND DISADVANTAGED~~ DISADVANTAGED STUDENT PROGRAMS.

SECTION 4. 36.25 (14m) (a) of the statutes is amended to read:

36.25 **(14m)** (a) The board shall fund programs for recruiting ~~minority and~~ disadvantaged students and for ~~minority and~~ disadvantaged students enrolled in the system.

SECTION 5. 36.25 (14m) (b) of the statutes is amended to read:

36.25 **(14m)** (b) By April 15, 1992, and annually thereafter, the board shall adopt a precollege, recruitment and retention plan for ~~minority and~~ disadvantaged students enrolled in the system.

SECTION 6. 36.25 (14m) (c) 2. of the statutes is amended to read:

36.25 **(14m)** (c) 2. All financial aid distributed to students, categorized by ~~ethnic group,~~ class level and dependency status. The report shall include

information on financial need, percentage of need satisfied by loan, percentage of need satisfied by grant, and the percentage remaining unsatisfied.

SECTION 7. 36.34 (title) and (1) (title) and (a) of the statutes are repealed.

SECTION 8. 36.34 (1) (b) of the statutes is renumbered 36.34 and amended to read:

36.34 Ben R. Lawton grant program. The board shall establish a grant program for ~~minority undergraduates~~ disadvantaged undergraduate students enrolled in the system. The board shall designate all grants under this ~~subsection~~ section as Lawton grants. The board may not make a grant under this ~~subsection~~ section to a person whose name appears on the statewide support lien docket under s. 49.854 (2) (b), unless the person provides to the board a payment agreement that has been approved by the county child support agency under s. 59.53 (5) and that is consistent with rules promulgated under s. 49.858 (2) (a).

SECTION 9. 38.01 (4m) of the statutes is created to read:

38.01 **(4m)** (a) Subject to par. (b), "disadvantaged," with respect to a student, means having experienced any unfavorable economic, familial, geographic, physical, or other personal hardship.

(b) The term "disadvantaged" may be further defined by the board by rule, but in doing so, the board may not permit, either directly or indirectly, the consideration of a student's race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or religion or the consideration of a student's identity as a member of a group without regard to individual qualities.

SECTION 10. 38.04 (8) (title) of the statutes is amended to read:

38.04 **(8)** (title) ~~MINORITY~~ DISADVANTAGED STUDENT PARTICIPATION AND RETENTION PLAN.

SECTION 11. 38.04 (8) (a) of the statutes is repealed.

SECTION 12. 38.04 (8) (b) of the statutes is renumbered 38.04 (8) and amended to read:

38.04 **(8)** Annually by January 1, the board shall develop a plan to increase ~~minority group member~~ participation and retention in the technical college system of disadvantaged students. The plan shall specify each district board's goals and objectives for ~~minority group member~~ participation and retention of disadvantaged students. The plan shall outline activities and programs that enhance ~~minority group member~~ participation and retention of disadvantaged students and shall review the progress made by the board and by district boards in the previous school year.

SECTION 13. 38.26 (title) of the statutes is amended to read:

38.26 (title) **~~Minority~~ Disadvantaged student participation and retention grants.**

SECTION 14. 38.26 (1) of the statutes is repealed.

SECTION 15. 38.26 (2) (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) of the statutes are amended to read:

38.26 **(2)** (a) The creation or expansion of programs that provide counseling and tutoring services for ~~minority~~ disadvantaged students.

(b) Programs that demonstrate innovative approaches to increasing ~~minority~~

disadvantaged student placement and retention in technical education programs that have a high earning potential for their graduates.

(c) Providing internships to ~~minority~~ disadvantaged students enrolled in programs that prepare their graduates for admission to a teacher education program at an institution within the University of Wisconsin System.

(d) Programs that combine basic skills and occupational training as a means of expediting basic skills remediation and increasing retention of ~~minority~~ disadvantaged students.

(e) Programs that use community-based organizations to assist in the recruitment, training and retention of ~~minority~~ disadvantaged students.

SECTION 16. 38.27 (1) (a) of the statutes is amended to read:

38.27 **(1)** (a) The creation or expansion of adult high school, adult basic education, and English as a 2nd language courses. The board shall give priority to courses serving students with disabilities or ~~minority,~~ unemployed~~,~~ or disadvantaged students.

SECTION 17. 39.15 (1) (c) of the statutes is repealed.

SECTION 18. 39.26 of the statutes is renumbered 39.26 (intro.) and amended to read:

39.26 ~~Definition~~ Definitions. (intro.) In this subchapter~~, "board"~~:

(1) "Board" means the higher educational aids board.

SECTION 19. 39.26 (2) of the statutes is created to read:

39.26 **(2)** (a) Subject to par. (b), "disadvantaged," with respect to a student,

means having experienced any unfavorable economic, familial, geographic, physical, or other personal hardship.

(b) The term "disadvantaged" may be further defined by the board by rule, but in doing so, the board may not permit, either directly or indirectly, the consideration of a student's race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or religion or the consideration of a student's identity as a member of a group without regard to individual qualities.

SECTION 20. 39.40 (title) of the statutes is amended to read:

39.40 (title) ~~**Minority teacher**~~ **Teacher loan program for disadvantaged students.**

SECTION 21. 39.40 (1) of the statutes is repealed and recreated to read:

39.40 **(1)** In this section, "economically disadvantaged pupil" has the meaning given in s. 115.43 (1).

SECTION 22. 39.40 (2) (intro.) of the statutes is amended to read:

39.40 **(2)** (intro.) The board shall establish a loan program for ~~minority~~ disadvantaged students who meet all of the following requirements:

SECTION 23. 39.40 (3) (b) 1. of the statutes is amended to read:

39.40 **(3)** (b) 1. The recipient is employed as provided in subd. 1m. by a public or private elementary or secondary school, or by a tribal school, as defined in s. 115.001 (15m), located in a school district in this state in which ~~minority students~~ economically disadvantaged pupils constitute at least ~~40~~ 60 percent of the membership, as defined in s. 121.004 (5).

SECTION 24. 39.44 (title) of the statutes is repealed and recreated to read:

39.44 (title) **Grants for disadvantaged undergraduate students.**

SECTION 25. 39.44 (1) (a) of the statutes is repealed.

SECTION 26. 39.44 (1) (b) of the statutes is renumbered 39.44 (1) and amended to read:

39.44 **(1)** There is established, to be administered by the board, ~~the minority undergraduate retention~~ a grant program for ~~minority undergraduates~~ the retention of disadvantaged undergraduate students enrolled in private, nonprofit higher educational institutions in this state or in technical colleges in this state.

SECTION 27. 39.44 (3) (c) of the statutes is amended to read:

39.44 **(3)** (c) Annually report to the board the number of awards made, the amount of each award, the ~~minority~~ disadvantaged status of each recipient, other financial aid awards made to each recipient, and the total amount of financial aid made available to the eligible students.

SECTION 28. 39.46 (2) (g) of the statutes is repealed.

SECTION 29. Initial applicability.

(1) The treatment of ss. 36.25 (14) and (14m) (title), (a), (b), and (c) 2., 36.34 (title) and (1) (title) and (a), 38.04 (8) (title) and (a), 38.26 (title), (1), and (2) (a), (b), (c), (d), and (e), 38.27 (1) (a), 39.15 (1) (c), 39.44 (title), (1) (a), and (3) (c), and 39.46 (2) (g), the renumbering and amendment of ss. 36.34 (1) (b), 38.04 (8) (b), 39.26, and 39.44 (1) (b), and the creation of ss. 36.05 (6r), 38.01 (4m), and 39.26 (2) first apply in the 2026-27 academic year.

(2) The treatment of s. 39.40 (title), (1), (2) (intro.), and (3) (b) 1. first applies to loans made on the effective date of this subsection.

(END)