

UW-Stout: Will create short-term programs to fill region's high-demand jobs with help from \$2 million federal grant

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Certificate courses in areas such as manufacturing, cybersecurity will train hundreds of workers over the next four years

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Menomonie, Wis. – University of Wisconsin-Stout will work closely with Wisconsin businesses to ensure a recently announced \$2 million federal grant will provide hundreds of workers with the skills needed to fill the state's most in-demand jobs.

Over the next four years, UW-Stout FUSE (Fast Upskilling for Skills and Employment) will give adult learners, displaced and underemployed workers, and other students the skills needed to succeed through six new short-term programs serving high-demand sectors aligned with [Wisconsin's Hot Jobs](#), which may include health care and behavioral support, manufacturing and logistics, IT support and cybersecurity, meeting and event planning, and child care.

UW-Stout is the only institution in Wisconsin and one of only a handful of four-year universities nationwide among the 22 recipients of a U.S. Department of Education [Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education \(FIPSE\)](#) Special Project Program grant to create high-quality, short-term programs.

The FIPSE grant to UW-Stout is in the amount of \$2,031,578, and 100% of the federal funds will be used by the FUSE project with no additional funds financed by nongovernmental sources.

UW-Stout is now building the new certificate programs in cooperation with business and industry partners as well as the West Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board, said **Executive Director of Educational Pathways and Outreach Beth Hein**.

“FUSE is built on listening first — to employers, to industry leaders and to our regional partners,” Hein said. “When business and education work side by side, we create programs that don’t just prepare students for jobs, but for long-term careers. Our ongoing connection with industry keeps our training relevant, responsive and impactful.”

FUSE will fill training gap

Wisconsin and eastern Minnesota are experiencing sustained and intensifying workforce shortages across multiple critical industries, most notably those targeted by the FUSE program. Employers throughout the region consistently report difficulty filling both entry-level and mid-skill roles, even as job postings persist at historically high levels and unemployment sits near record lows.

However, current short-term employment education programs are fragmented and uneven, tending to focus on very short basic workshops and bootcamps or traditional semester-long courses. UW-Stout’s FUSE program will fill the gap between these options.

As Wisconsin’s only [Polytechnic University](#), UW-Stout is uniquely poised to contribute to the development of short-term credentials to meet the employment needs of Wisconsin and eastern Minnesota. UW-Stout has a strong history of applied learning and research, business and industry collaborations, and career-focused education.

The FIPSE grant received by UW-Stout in January will build the capacity of employer-aligned programs that last from eight to 15 weeks and culminate in industry-recognized skills and credentials. The programs will also be Workforce Pell eligible, allowing students with financial needs to access them through the newly established Workforce Pell Grant Program, which goes into effect on July 1.

Programs will launch by end of 2026

UW-Stout anticipates serving 400 to 600 students during the four-year grant period. The first two FUSE certificate programs will be launched as early as the end of 2026. The certificate programs will be stackable, with a pathway allowing students to apply their FUSE credentials toward UW-Stout bachelor's degrees. FUSE students will also have access to academic support, such as onboarding, academic coaching, digital literacy support, tutoring and other wraparound services.

Among the students FUSE will target are adult, rural and under-resourced learners, who will make up at least 40% of enrollment. The program will use flexible, hybrid evening and weekend scheduling to reduce barriers faced by working adults and caregivers. FUSE will also set specific performance targets, including ensuring that 80% of students complete their program, 75% obtain credentials and 70% find job placement within six months of graduation.

"This work is only possible because of UW-Stout's strong partnerships," Hein said. "Together with business, industry and community leaders we are creating opportunities that meet real needs and open doors for learners across our region."

Businesses can help determine which programs move forward first by participating in [program advisory committees](#), sharing workforce data, and providing direct input on hiring needs and skill gaps. Interested parties are invited to contact UW-Stout's [Educational Pathways & Outreach Office](#) at continuinged@uwstout.edu to learn how they can take part.

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