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GREEN BAY PRESS-GAZETTE

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AARP's Scam Jam raises awareness on new schemes



Seniors listen as Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions Attorney Supervisor Robin Jacobs speaks during a Scam Jam event on Oct. 16 at University Union on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. AARP Wisconsin held the seminar to educate seniors on some of the latest cryptocurrency-based scams.

PHOTOS BY TORK MASON/USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN

Cryptocurrency and AI-based scams are on the rise, fraud experts say

Vivian Barrett
Green Bay Press-Gazette
USA TODAY NETWORK – WISCONSIN

The Brown County Sheriff's Office has investigated over \$4.6 million lost to cryptocurrency scams since the beginning of 2024, according to Sgt. Justin Raska.

A relatively new scam format in which scammers direct victims to convert cash into cryptocurrency through crypto ATMs is exploding. Cryptocurrency ATM-involved scams in Wisconsin increased by 99% in one year, Department of Financial Institutions attorneys supervisor Robin Jacobs told a room full of Green Bay area residents Oct. 16.

"What the cryptocurrency ATM allows you to do is get cash money from your bank or a regular bank ATM, deposit your money into the cryptocurrency ATM and then it's converted to crypto and sent to a criminal's virtual wallet,"



Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions Attorney Supervisor Robin Jacobs speaks during a Scam Jam event Oct. 16 in Green Bay.

AARP Wisconsin senior program specialist Courtney Anclam told the Green Bay Press-Gazette. "Scammers are coaching people through how to set up the account you need to send money virtually."

Cryptocurrency scams were a primary focus of AARP's Scam Jam, a fraud prevention event hosted Oct. 16 at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. The event was intended to raise awareness and educate community members on common scams experts are seeing and how to avoid them.

"Folks are here because scams are so prevalent right now," AARP communications director Jim Flaherty said. "It's all about education. ... What we always say is, the more you know about something that's coming, the better you're well-armed to be able to protect yourself."

Cryptocurrency imposter scams are on the rise

Imposter scams are the type that typically comes to mind when you imagine a scammer: someone impersonating another person, business or government

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Report: WI ranks among the worst for college affordability

Kelly Meyerhofer
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
USA TODAY NETWORK – WISCONSIN

Wisconsin is ranked among the worst in the country for college affordability, according to a new report.

The National College Attainment Network, a nonprofit aimed at improving student access to higher education, has calculated each state's affordability gap for nearly a decade. It compares the cost of attendance at each institution to what the average student and family can pay.

The organization's latest annual report, based on 2022-23 data, found none of Wisconsin's four-year public universities and just two of the state's technical colleges were affordable. Only four other states ranked lower in their share of schools being unaffordable: Delaware, New Hampshire, North Dakota and Rhode Island.

The organization suggested expanding a need-based tuition promise program as among the best solutions to addressing affordability in Wisconsin. The statewide version of this program has faced an uphill battle since it launched in 2023.

"States that are investing in higher education systems have more affordable higher education," report author Louisa Woodhouse said. "We know what works. When states are investing, it means students are more able to access and complete a degree."

To estimate student costs, Woodhouse pulled each school's published cost of attendance. This includes tuition, fees, housing and other costs. She added \$300 for emergencies.

Woodhouse then turned to a federal database to pull data on the average grants, loans and work study payments at each institution. She tacked on an estimate of a student's summer wages, based on full-time work at the state minimum wage, and an "expected family contribution" using average Pell grant awards.

The average affordability gap for students attending four-year public universities in Wisconsin was \$3,549 per year, according to the report. That's more than twice the national average of \$1,555.

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UW-PLATTEVILLE

Researchers transform spoiled milk into eco-friendly plastic

Kelly Meyerhofer
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
USA TODAY NETWORK – WISCONSIN

Don't cry over spilled milk. A pair of University of Wisconsin-Platteville professors, disturbed by news stories of farmers dumping milk during the pandemic, chose instead to take action.

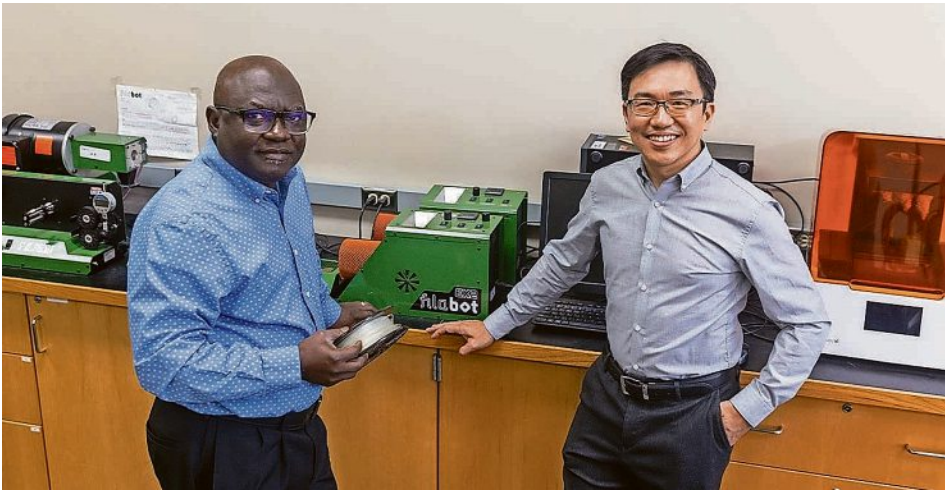
Joseph Wu and John Obielodan extracted proteins from spoiled milk and blended them with traditional plastic components to make a biodegradable alternative. The recently patented

method they pioneered is cheaper to produce, more environmentally friendly and potentially offers a new revenue stream for dairy farmers.

"We turn trash into something valuable," said Wu, a 17-year professor in the chemistry department. "I believe we come up with a scientific way to help Wisconsin because we have a lot of dairy farmers."

Farmers were forced to flush tens of thousands of gallons of milk down the drain in 2020. There was no place for the

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John Obielodan, left, and Joseph Wu in the UW-Platteville lab where they developed a sustainable plastic material made from dairy waste products. WiSys, the technology transfer office that supports many UW campuses' research, was recently awarded a U.S. patent for the process Obielodan and Wu developed.

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