

Minutes of the Research, Economic Development, & Innovation Committee
University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents
UW-River Falls
April 10, 2014

Chairman Higgins convened the meeting of the Research, Economic Development, and Innovation (REDI) Committee at 10:55 a.m. Regents Bradley, Farrow, Higgins, Hribar, and Peterson were present.

a. Approval of the Minutes of the February 6, 2014 Meeting of the Research, Economic Development, and Innovation Committee

Chairman Higgins asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the February 6, 2014, REDI Committee meeting. Motion was made by Regent Bradley and seconded by Regent Hribar to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

b. Update by UW-La Crosse of the Economic Development Incentive Grant Project: Expansion of Statistical Consulting Center to Service Business Needs

Dr. Barbara Bennie, Associate Professor of Mathematics at UW-La Crosse, provided an update on the Economic Development Incentive Grant project. The UW-La Crosse grant of \$126,248 is the smallest of the 12 grants that were selected as part of the Economic Development Incentive Grant program. This grant will allow the Center to extend its services outward to Wisconsin businesses and organizations, to increase the number of degrees granted in statistics and to expand the internship and work experience component of the mathematics curriculum.

Business solicitations on behalf of the Center will begin within the next few weeks, and student interns are already signed up for the summer. In response to a question from Regent Bradley, Dr. Bennie indicated that hourly fees will be established for project analysis and fixed fees for workshops. Regent Petersen asked if the program was geographically bound. Dr. Bennie stated that the center primarily will focus on opportunities within a one-hour radius, because the face-to-face contact is important, especially in the early stages of the project.

c. LEAP Education/Business Compact Discussion

Regent Hribar led a discussion of the LEAP Education/Business Compact. LEAP stands for an initiative titled “Liberal Education and America’s Promise” that focuses on making high-quality learning a national priority as employers increasingly seek college graduates with a broad set of critical-thinking, leadership, and knowledge skills to help fuel the innovation-driven economy. Regent Hribar noted that only 11 percent of business leaders say graduates today have the necessary skills and competencies to succeed in the workplace.

Regent Hribar stated that the LEAP initiative encourages active partnership between campus and business leaders in an effort to increase student achievement and attainment. She noted that she is the first state business owner to sign the LEAP Compact and said that a UW-Whitewater alumna and Harley Davidson executive has become the second signer of the compact. Regent Hribar will begin to advocate for additional participation by Wisconsin business leaders.

Regent Farrow commented that with our wide geographic representation across the state, LEAP should provide another good touch point to work with our community colleges to broaden student educational experiences for the workplace. As a working adult and non-traditional student, Regent Hribar agreed regarding this potential. Regent Petersen indicated that there is also a responsibility for business to be proactively involved, and that more needs to be done to encourage employers to align with and embrace this effort. Regent Peterson said that the better we are able to do this, the better we will succeed in addressing skills gap issues.

Provost Kopper mentioned that co-op and intern programs and business partnerships are being integrated with curriculum to a much greater extent now than in the past. Provost Earns highlighted the need to carry the message beyond CEOs to middle managers. Chancellor Wells noted UW-Oshkosh has been using the LEAP learning rubrics and outcomes and implementing electronic portfolios to help students document their learning performance.

d. REDI Committee Strategic Plan Review and Discussion

The REDI Committee revisited the committee's strategic goals and performance milestones. To date, the plan has led to the implementation of the 2013-2015 Economic Development Incentive Grants and the recapitalization of WiSys. These efforts have generated matching grants and in-kind contributions of nearly \$4.5 million from statewide business partners in key industry priority sectors and from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC).

UW System Associate Vice President David Brukardt provided an update on the UW/WEDC partnership. He said that from everything we know, this particular type of university/state partnership is unlike anything else in the country, and it pays dividends for the state and for the university in many ways. He highlighted the "Ideadvance" match program and other examples that demonstrate the UW and WEDC's deep mutual commitment to encouraging campus outreach to business with supporting funds that foster start-ups and product commercialization. He also highlighted the WEDC partnership and support of WiSys and noted future initiatives under discussion will continue to help the university in its business development outreach efforts.

Regent Farrow requested that we ensure we are providing value to WEDC and to our stakeholders externally. Regent Higgins said that we are working every day to measure and evaluate the value that we are providing. He said that we are doing what we set out to do, which is leveraging the research, economic development, and innovative talent and resources on our campuses to enhance the value of a UW education and to work within our communities to create jobs in Wisconsin.

e. UW-River Falls Undergraduate Research, Economic Development, and Business Outreach Discussion

UW-River Falls Chancellor Dean Van Galen led a discussion showcasing UW-River Falls' focus on undergraduate research, economic development, and innovation initiatives across a wide spectrum of high-impact practices.

Glenn Potts, Dean of the College of Business and Economics, discussed the Center of Innovation and Business Development (CIBD) and how it is focused on meeting the needs of business and industry. He noted that one element of that is the full-time MBA program, and that another element is the creation of an incubator in collaboration with the city and local counties. Regent Bradley noted that one of the reasons for the creation of REDI was to identify and address obstacles facing the business community in dealing with the university, and that this outreach effort helps to anticipate and address those needs for business.

Scot Simpson, City Administrator of River Falls, highlighted the UW-River Falls partnership with the debut of the new regional business incubator for both physical and virtual incubation and business development support. Committee members learned that entrepreneurship is strong in Pierce and St. Croix counties, with an average of nearly 1,500 new businesses formed each year. The incubator provides a front-porch “welcoming, visible entry” and a gathering place for business startups and is set to open in 2016.

Shannon Zimmerman, CEO, Sajan, Inc., suggested that the key responsibility for CEOs is to actively engage with the community and university resources that surround it. He noted that this outreach is a priority for Sajan, which provides language translation. This business is a start-up that today has offices across the globe. He stated that as Sajan grew it faced the challenge of accessing talent. To address that challenge, he stated that Sajan hired eight UW-River Falls interns to help address this challenge, and this year Sajan will hire 12 UW-River Falls interns.

Regent Higgins adjourned the meeting at 12:31 p.m.