

Minutes of the Research, Economic Development, & Innovation Committee
University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents
UW System
December 10, 2015

Chairman Higgins convened the meeting of the Research, Economic Development, and Innovation (REDI) Committee at 1:00 p.m. Regents Higgins, Hall, Bradley, Harsy, Petersen and Tyler were present.

a. Approval of the Minutes of the October 8, 2015, Meeting of the Research, Economic Development, and Innovation Committee

Chairman Higgins asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the October 8, 2015, REDI Committee meeting. Motion was made by Regent Petersen and seconded by Regent Hall to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

b. UW System Vision for Creating Pathways to Fill Statewide Workforce Needs – Led by UW System President Ray Cross

UW System President Ray Cross thanked Regent Higgins for the opportunity to speak to the REDI committee. President Cross discussed the need to support the expanding workforce needs of Wisconsin's 21st Century economy. Having recently completed strategic planning listening sessions across the state, President Cross noted that a recurring theme highlighted the need to further connect university talent to businesses within the state. As employers focus on closing the skills gap, President Cross noted that a population gap is exacerbating the problem. He mentioned that students who have opportunities to connect as undergraduates with Wisconsin businesses and industries are more likely to choose to live and to work in Wisconsin as they begin their careers. Currently, he explained that roughly 15 percent of out-of-state students coming to Wisconsin to study stay in Wisconsin upon graduation; however, of students that participate in an internship experience, roughly 62 percent of those students stay in Wisconsin. President Cross acknowledged that UW System campuses are already highly active in business outreach efforts that encompass internships, mentorships, and job-placement programs for students. He highlighted a few examples that effectively illustrate current campus/business outreach efforts, including the Northwest Engineering Consortium and the newly created Engineering Technology program that was formed with support from the REDI Committee/UW System Economic Development Incentive Grant program.

President Cross emphasized that UW System has consistently cooperated and collaborated with partners, but UW System must now further align with the Technical Colleges, businesses, and people of the state. **President Cross outlined a vision to foster programmatic and institutional support that encourages every UW System junior and senior to have at least one business experience before graduating.** He explained that this effort must connect more University of Wisconsin students to a Wisconsin business/community experience.

Regent Mark Tyler asked if there would be a requirement for such an experience across the entire System, and President Cross explained that a number of campuses have already incorporated these types of experiences into their curriculum, but it will require partnerships to see each campus achieving this goal over time.

c. WEDC Partnership Update – Led by Secretary and CEO Mark Hogan

Mark Hogan, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation's newly appointed CEO and Secretary, introduced himself to the REDI Committee, reviewed his background, and provided an update on current initiatives and programs. In the six weeks he has been on the job, he acknowledged how rewarding it has been to work with the 105 WEDC staff and with UW System partners such as David Brukaradt and other UW and state partners, including the more than 600 economic development partners across the state.

Discussion followed Mark Hogan's comments. Regent Mark Tyler asked about forming a pathway to not only raise the number of jobs, but to also raise the quality of jobs. Regent Bradley asked whether System campuses were producing enough grads or whether campuses' curriculum were misaligned with demanded workforce skills. Chairman Higgins asked for a summary of the state branding research WEDC had conducted and presented at the recent Future Wisconsin Economic Summit 2015. Regent Hall asked how WEDC planned to have an impact on minority businesses and how they would connect with minority students within the University of Wisconsin System. Regent Petersen noted that nine of the 20 initiatives from REDI's Committee linked to WEDC, and that Mark Hogan should leverage campuses, chancellors, and their teams as WEDC expands its efforts across the state. All of the Regents thanked Mark Hogan for speaking to the REDI Committee and congratulated him on his new role. Mark Hogan addressed each of their questions and extended an invitation to Chancellors to meet and expand collaboration around state economic development efforts.

d. WiSys -- The Momentum Continues – Led by WiSys Executive Director Arjun Sanga

Chairman Higgins introduced WiSys Executive Director Arjun Sanga. Director Sanga provided background information about the organization's work and progress, including individual contributions statewide of each new staff member. He described the establishment of the first official WiSys office in the western part of the state, hosted by UW-River Falls. Director Sanga also highlighted the physical presence of the organization at ten institutions and a commitment to continue to grow outreach efforts.

With the newly created Student Ambassador Program, WiSys has hired student ambassadors at ten institutions, and Director Sanga summarized their most recent work this semester as well as the overarching benefits of the program.

WiSys saw record participation at the recent 2015 Wisconsin Science & Technology Symposium with 207 registered delegates from across Wisconsin and more than 99 undergraduate students in attendance.

Director Sanga concluded with a summary of disclosure activity across the state, which is one method to measure technology transfer. He explained that WiSys had processed 56 disclosures in 12 months for 2015, a notable increase compared to the last five years, and with good representation from institutions across the System.

Discussion followed Director Sanga's presentation with questions from Regents Tyler, Higgins, and Harsy. Regent Tyler asked how WiSys markets disclosures. Executive Director Sanga explained that there is a patent manager and staff that conduct market analysis. Regent Higgins asked how student ambassadors are expanding their work and how succession is being addressed. Executive Director Sanga explained that WiSys conducts monthly forums to share progress, gather ideas, and explain programs and services. He mentioned that each campus conducts its own events, and that current student ambassadors are assisting in promoting their roles and seeking successors. Regent Harsy asked if there were roadblocks in cross-departmental work on campuses. Executive Director Sanga said he would report back.

Regent Higgins congratulated Executive Director Sanga, and thanked him for presenting to the REDI committee.

e. Regent Scholar Program Status Report – Led by UW System Regents Tim Higgins and Mark Tyler

Chairman Higgins asked Regent Tyler to update the committee on the Regent Scholar Program as chair of the evaluation committee. Regent Tyler thanked Chairman Higgins for providing the resources to continue the program and provided background information on this year's evaluation committee. He noted that the evaluators represented healthcare, marketing, economic development, policy development, and advanced manufacturing. He acknowledged receipt of grant applications representing 34 innovative projects led by faculty and their respective business collaborators across the state. As the chair of the selection committee, Regent Mark Tyler then provided an update on the progress of the evaluation committee and noted that final award recipients would be named in January and honored at the UW System Board of Regents meeting in February 2016. Regent Higgins thanked the committee for its work.

In closing, Chairman Higgins explained that REDI provides regular updates of Committee activities. This information can be found at: https://www.wisconsin.edu/economic-development/download/economic_development_contacts_and_updates/REDI-Update-December-2015.pdf

Chairman Higgins adjourned the meeting of the Research, Economic Development, and Innovation (REDI) Committee at 2:15 p.m.