

**Minutes of the Research, Economic Development & Innovation Committee  
University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents**

**UW-Madison**

**July 6, 2017**

Chairman Eve Hall convened the meeting of the Research, Economic Development, and Innovation (REDI) Committee at 9:04 a.m. Regents Erickson, Hall, Higgins, and Tyler were present. Regent Klein was absent.

**a. Approval of the minutes of the June 8, 2017 Meeting of the Research, Economic Development, and Innovation Committee**

Chairman Hall asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the June 8, 2017 REDI Committee meeting. Motion by Regent Tyler, seconded by Regent Higgins, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

**b. WiSys Technology Foundation – 2017 Progress and Performance Report-  
Operational Excellence**

WiSys Executive Director Arjun Sanga provided an update on the record results WiSys delivered during the fiscal year just concluded. WiSys has been significantly successful in reducing technology development costs and improving process efficiency at UW System campuses. Over the past three years, there has been an average of 60 disclosures annually, which is more than double the amount reported five years ago.

Drawing focus to two WiSys strategic goals, (1) supporting faculty, staff, student, and alumni innovation; and (2) to identify, develop, and transfer new innovations. Sanga highlighted multiple programs that have been implemented since 2015 to help fulfill these goals. These programs include the Quick Pitch contest, Prototype Hackathon, Innovation in Aging program, and the Wisconsin Big Idea Tournament.

Sanga introduced UW-Eau Claire Chancellor James Schmidt who provided insight as to the significance and impact of the Wisconsin Big Idea Tournament on students and faculty. He stated that the tournament is a business plan competition for students and, in its inaugural year, the tournament involved 12 student teams from 9 campuses. Chancellor Schmidt also highlighted the success of the Quick Pitch contest, which allows students to compete by explaining their research in an accessible, easy-to-understand elevator pitch in three minutes or less. Schmidt stated that the challenge is unique because it “helps stakeholders and the public understand the work of researchers. It gives students a chance to identify how their research can be applied, commercialized, and why it makes a difference.”

Sanga introduced UW-La Crosse Chancellor Joe Gow. Gow provided an overview of the Carl Gulbrandsen Innovator of the Year award, and introduced the 2016 award recipient Dr. Robert McGaff, professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry at UW-La Crosse. Professor McGaff spoke of how WiSys facilitates faculty and student connections, and builds enduring relationships with business partners. He shared examples of how his research group has evolved, due to the influence of WiSys.

Following the WiSys presentation, Regent Higgins shared the history between WiSys, WARF, and UW System, stating that the work and relationship with WiSys has been “very important strategically, especially after the formation of the REDI Committee. It became a comprehensive, professional organization, connecting with faculty, students, institutions and community.” Regent Higgins read Resolution I.4.b recognizing UW System support, both financially and programmatically for the continued growth and success of the important and dynamic work of WiSys.

The resolution reads as follows:

*That, upon recommendation of the President of the University of Wisconsin System, the UW System Board of Regents reaffirms its support of WiSys as the sole technology transfer mechanism for research, innovation, and technology transfer at UW System two-year colleges and four-year comprehensive universities and of the further development of policies and practices that support and encourage faculty and undergraduate research, technology transfer, entrepreneurship, and innovation.*

A motion by Regent Tyler to approve the resolution as written was seconded by Regent Erickson and carried unanimously.

Arjun Sanga and Professor McGaff then answered questions about the presentation. In summary, the following concepts were addressed during the Q & A session: (1) The biggest challenge faced by WiSys is working with campuses to ensure faculty have time to engage in the programs during the academic year while still maintaining their teaching loads; (2) Continued Board of Regent and UW System support of WiSys and WiSys meetings is key to success, as well as supporting continuous networking opportunities for faculty and students; and (3) Increasing prospects to promote diversity throughout the WiSys programs is an important focus for WiSys. Efforts to include women and minorities as WiSys Ambassadors and as team members in the various competitions have been successful and will continue to be a concentration for WiSys.

Chairperson Hall announced the “Faces of Entrepreneurship” summit to be held on the UW-Stevens Point campus on Thursday, October 26, 2017, stating “the purpose of this event will be to discuss strategies that can influence entrepreneurship, small business development and

economic development, with a focus on improving the numbers of entrepreneurs from under-represented groups”. In partnership with UW-System, UW-Stevens Point will host the summit designed to gather business deans, faculty, and students from all UW System campuses, Wisconsin private colleges, and technical school partners, along with economic development leaders from across the state. An evening reception will be held on Wednesday, October 25. All are invited to attend the reception and the summit.

### **c. Discussion on the Metrics of Entrepreneurship and WEDC Partnerships with UW System**

Aaron Hagar, WEDC’s Vice President of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, highlighted WEDC’s efforts to collaborate with university and state businesses to foster entrepreneurial activities and to compress the time frame from idea to product commercialization. Hagar continued a discussion begun last month by Wisconsin Technology President Tom Still related to varying perceptions of the state’s ability to support start-ups.

Hagar noted that Wisconsin continues to set new records for totals of certified Qualified New Business Ventures (QNBV) and in terms of new funding and investments in start-ups. Hagar shared information about multiple UW collaborations that are firmly in place and emphasized that WEDC continues to seek new campus partners across the UW System to build on current innovative successes such as Ideadvance. Hagar also stressed the importance for continued meaningful conversations regarding the analysis of collected data and identifying next-step opportunities.

Hagar opened the floor to questions. The following topics were discussed during the Q & A session: (1) Identifying factors that affect entrepreneurship and success of individuals who stay in their birthplace versus individuals who move to new locations; (2) Immigration and its importance for businesses; (3) Identifying additional opportunities for UW System to work more closely with WEDC in the future; and (4) Extending an invitation to Mark Lange to speak to the REDI committee about his “big data” capabilities and how it might further support the growth of entrepreneurship across the state.

### **d. Update and Strategic Review of UW-Stout Discovery Center Research, Economic Development, and Innovation Activities**

Executive Director Randy Hulke provided an update on strategic initiatives and business partnerships led by his team of experts at the UW-Stout Discovery Center. Hulke’s presentation summarized recent accomplishments, provided a status update of federal and state partnerships (including the recently expanded Wisconsin Fab Lab initiative), and highlighted the Center’s alignment with state workforce needs.

Hulke shared that the Center operates under three collaborative initiatives: Collaborative UW-Stout Initiatives, Collaborative Wisconsin Initiatives, and Collaborative Federal Initiatives. Since 1994, industry partners report \$651 million in financial impacts and 5,132 jobs created or saved as a result of collaborative projects with UW-Stout. Additionally, in 2017, the Center supported 99 industry- and client-funded research and technical assistance projects producing \$35.9 million in cost-savings, sales, and investment, and added 248 jobs to the state's economy, as reported by clients.

During the question and answer session, Hulke acknowledged that 37% of the Center's support is received from federal funding. The Center is working to identify additional funding sources, including fostering corporate relationships as well as a potential increase of fee-based services.

Chairman Hall adjourned the meeting at 10:33am.