

Minutes of the Research, Economic Development, & Innovation Committee
University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents
Wisconsin Room
UW-Milwaukee
June 8, 2017

Chairman Eve Hall convened the meeting of the Research, Economic Development, and Innovation (REDI) Committee at 10:45 a.m. Regents Erickson, Hall, Higgins, Klein, and Tyler were present.

a. Approval of the Minutes of the April 6, 2017, Meeting of the Research, Economic Development, and Innovation Committee

Chairman Hall asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the April 6, 2017, REDI Committee meeting. A motion by Regent Klein was seconded by Regent Tyler to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

b. UW-Milwaukee: Building an Urban Research Enterprise and Developing a Vibrant Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

UW-Milwaukee Chancellor Mark Mone highlighted significant campus initiatives related to entrepreneurship and innovation and emphasized how these efforts increasingly are being integrated into curriculum and programming across campus.

The Chancellor introduced Brian Thompson, President of the UWM Research Foundation and Director of the Lubar Entrepreneurship Center. Thompson provided an update regarding UWM's significant increase in patents and licenses and noted the acceleration of pathways from research to product commercialization. Thompson made special note of the launch of the new Lubar Entrepreneurship Center, which offers an array of programming, including the National Science Foundation I-Corps program to foster entrepreneurship. He also highlighted the growth of entrepreneurial "pop-up" classes at UWM, with more than 1,500 student interactions to-date that have helped to spur innovative thinking across a wide range of STEM and arts curricula.

Thompson's co-presenters included Dr. Ilya Avdeev, Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering; Dr. Adel Nasiri, Associate Dean for Research, Electrical Engineering; and Entrepreneurs and Co-Inventors Dr. Carol Hirschmugl, Professor, Physics, and Dr. Marija Gajdardziska-Josifovska, Dean of the UWM Graduate School.

The two entrepreneurs highlighted efforts to "turn physicists into capitalists" with their patented graphene product, which promises to significantly increase battery storage capacity and significantly speed computer processing capabilities. Regent Higgins asked how their graphene materials might be superior to many others that have been introduced in recent years. Dr. Gajdardziska-Josifovska explained that their graphene product acts as a semi-conductor, which distinguishes it from typical graphene compounds.

c. WEDC Update on Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and University Partnerships

Mark Hogan, WEDC's Secretary and Chief Executive Officer, provided an overview of WEDC business sector and community development initiatives and highlighted key programs and outcomes of state-led business development efforts and university collaborations. Hogan made special note of expanded WEDC programming across its minority chamber partners and mentioned that over the past year, WEDC has served 300 businesses directly and supported an additional 2200 companies through its partners.

Regent Klein asked Secretary Hogan about the importance of working through partners to achieve broad-based results. Hogan said that WEDC's key strategic partners, including UW System, are critical to efficient delivery of products and services across Wisconsin. Hogan also noted that WEDC's partners focus on providing support to underserved communities and diverse constituencies. Such efforts extend WEDC's reach through a variety of innovative financing and outreach initiatives administered through the partner networks, and in some cases include Kiva-type microloans.

d. Wisconsin Technology Council: Perspectives on the State's Entrepreneurial Ecosystem and the Strength of the University's Talent Pipeline

Wisconsin Technology Council President Tom Still provided an update on Council activities in the areas of entrepreneurship, technology transfer, venture capital, and university-industry research initiatives. In 2016, the Technology Council published a report on the value of higher education in Wisconsin and its role as a leading component of the state's talent pipeline. <http://wisconsintechcouncil.com/publications/higher-education-report/>

In his REDI presentation, Tom highlighted the strength of entrepreneurialism in Wisconsin and noted that the number of successful capital raises or "deal flow" increased from 76 events in 2011 to 137 such events in 2016. He attributed some of this success to the introduction of Wisconsin Act 255 tax credits through WEDC that allow investors to receive favorable tax treatment for such investments. Still also called on the university to conduct additional research into how best to message the strong start-up activity, despite the state's continued low rankings by the Kaufmann Foundation.

Regent Klein asked Still to elaborate on the Kaufmann metrics. Still said the Kaufman rankings are based in part on the number of people per 100,000 population who leave their jobs to start businesses. Still said in Wisconsin, many entrepreneurs start business from scratch and may not leave existing jobs to launch their start ups. During the discussion, Mark Hogan also noted that Wisconsin ranks as a top-10 state in Kaufmann's Main Street business index, and that once businesses are launched here, their five-year survival rate is well above the national average. President Ray Cross indicated that the UW System is willing to work with WEDC and the Wisconsin Technology Council to identify and better articulate meaningful metrics to gauge state business start-up activity.

Chairman Hall adjourned the meeting at 12:15 pm.