

**MINUTES OF THE RESEARCH, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & INNOVATION COMMITTEE
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM BOARD OF REGENTS**

Thursday, December 5, 2019

UW-Whitewater – James R. Connor University Center – UC 261
Whitewater, Wisconsin

Regent Cris Peterson called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Regents Eve Hall, Becky Levzow, and Torrey Tiedeman were present. Regent Peterson provided an opportunity for committee members to declare any conflicts of interest; none were so stated.

a. Approval of the minutes of the October 11, 2019 meeting.

On a motion by Regent Tiedeman and seconded by Regent Levzow, the minutes of the October 11, 2019, REDI Committee meeting at UW-Superior were unanimously approved.

b. “Inspire, Engage, Transform.” – Transforming Communities Through Data Compiled and Researched by the UW-Whitewater Fiscal and Economic Research Center (FERC).

FERC provides undergraduates with an opportunity to work closely with faculty experts in applying concepts and theories to practical, real-world cases. Its mission is to provide students with hands-on experience developing economic impact analyses for private sector and government clients throughout Wisconsin and beyond. For many students, it represents their first experience with research and survey techniques.

Several of FERC Director Russ Kashian’s students discussed their work at the center along with its impact on the greater community. The student researchers come from a wide range of disciplines. Student speakers included biology major and McNair Scholar Edel Contreras and history major Logan O’Brien.

UW-Whitewater Professors Kashian, Matthew Winden and Choton Basu highlighted the work they and their students do for a wide range of clients in business, industry, state agencies including WEDC, and academia, including research and analytical work that was incorporated in the UW System’s own statewide economic impact report. This project-based work experience builds skills and enhances student attractiveness to future employers.

Regent Becky Levzow inquired about how clients learn about the FERC’s capabilities. Professor Kashian said most contract requests come via referrals

from satisfied customers. Regent Tiedeman asked about the grade level of the student researchers. Professor Kashian said they tend to be juniors or seniors. Professor Winden added that whenever FERC does hire freshmen, they are mentored by upper class colleagues.

Regent Hall asked about the minority banking research highlighted during in the presentation. Professor Kashian said this work encompassed research with various state and national banks as part of a project funded by a \$400,000 grant from the Kellogg Foundation. FERC research results (with student involvement) has been published in 20 different peer-reviewed journals.

c. UW System Regent Scholar Award Program Overview.

WiSys Advisory Committee Chair and UW-River Falls Chancellor Dean Van Galen described the genesis of the UW System Regent Scholar award. The program, now in its fifth year, recognizes and rewards stellar faculty research. Typically, Regent Scholar award funds are used for faculty summer stipends and undergraduate internships that support innovative and collaborative research with industry partners and entrepreneurs.

WiSys manages the Regent Scholar program for UW System. WiSys President Arjun Sanga pointed out that each year, Regent Scholar award recipients are selected competitively by an evaluation committee made up of both public and private sector experts. President Sanga noted the accomplishments of the 12 previous award recipients, which represent a diverse range of faculty. In April 2020, the Board of Regents will formally recognize its next round of “Regent Scholars.”

d. Challenges and Opportunities in High-Tech Food Production and Lessons Learned for Wisconsin.

Wisconsin researcher, innovator, and venture capitalist Christopher Salm discussed challenges and opportunities in high-tech food production. Dr. Salm is a successful academic and industry collaborator who shared his insights and lessons learned relative to entrepreneurship and innovation in the highly competitive global food processing technology sector.

Early in his career, Dr. Salm pioneered the Lunchables food product line for Oscar Meyer before going on to create one of the largest pre-cooked, packaged food businesses in America. A Badger alum, Dr. Salm works closely with UW-Madison in a variety of efforts to unlock new ideas to improve health and quality

of life for farm animals and humans. In terms of best practices, he cited collaborators in The Netherlands who have taken their country—with one-fifth the land mass of Wisconsin and three times its population—to one that is today the world's number-two food exporter.

Dr. Salm sees many great opportunities ahead for those who can overcome their fear of failure and willingness to build strong relationships. During the discussion, UW-Madison Chancellor Becky Blank commented on the consistent, high level of collaboration Dr. Salm brings to his work with colleagues on the Madison campus.

In Chancellor Blank's words, Chris Salm asks the right kinds of questions that help to motivate and excite researchers. Said another way, he truly embodies the Wisconsin Idea. Salm's company, Ab E Discovery, works with UW-Madison researchers to better understand the health and immune-enhancing aspects found in animal microbiomes and substances such as choline, which is present in eggs. He called choline a supernutrient, the "Vitamin D" of the 21st Century. He is also working to harvest phosphates from lakes so these minerals can be sourced naturally from algae (vs. mining). Phosphate is a preservative widely used in the food industry.

He suggested the key to faster, more efficient commercialization is to ask the right questions early in the research process and to build the right relationships with a wide range of inventors and experts. In closing, he said researchers no longer live in the "information" age, but rather, the "relationship" age. For Dr. Salm, innovators who cultivate good relationships are more likely to be super-efficient in problem-solving. In addition to his highly informative talking points, he also brought samples of some of his best-selling food products.

e. The meeting was adjourned at 10:25 a.m.