

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

Thursday, June 4, 2020

WebEx Videoconference

Regent Robert Atwell called the meeting to order at 8:47 a.m. Regents Becky Levzow and Cris Peterson were present. Regent Atwell provided an opportunity for committee members to declare any conflicts of interest; none were so stated.

a. Approval of the minutes of the February 6, 2020 meeting.

On a motion by Regent Levzow and seconded by Regent Peterson, the minutes of the February 6, 2020, REDI Committee meeting via WebEx were unanimously approved.

b. Three perspectives on Research, Economic Development, and Innovation in Light of the Pandemic. Introduction by REDI Committee Chair Bob Atwell.

In his opening remarks, Regent Atwell acknowledged that COVID-19 has a wide range of medical, economic, social, psychological, and political dimensions. He observed that researchers know a lot more about the virus than they did just 90 days ago regarding mortality, treatment protocols, infection rates, and surface spread, among other topics. He highlighted the critical need for accessing the best of medical research and data while recognizing that most private and public sector leaders must make many decisions without the level of certainty that governs scientific research. He also commented on a conversation he had had with Dr. Rainer Grulich of the state of Hessen in Germany. Hessen state colleagues have a decades-long relationship with UW System and with officials in various state agencies in Wisconsin. Regent Atwell noted that Germany has been held up as a model of a focused and successful approach to containment of the pandemic's spread, while keeping its factories running at 80 percent. He expressed hope that UW campus locations will open up this fall with a positive, hopeful, and welcoming confidence that helps the state ramp back up quickly.

1. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Update on Research Focused on COVID-19

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, UW-Milwaukee's world-class researchers have focused their expertise on gathering data and devising possible solutions to slow its spread. As Wisconsin's public urban research

university, UWM researchers are trying to understand as much as possible about the disease and how it proliferates through communities.

UWM Chancellor Mark Mone and UWM Research Foundation President and Director of the Lubar Entrepreneurship Center Brian Thompson introduced three current initiatives highlighting the many pandemic research efforts under way at the university. They include determining a novel approach to locating hotspots, tracking COVID-19's disproportionate effects on the African-American community, and developing a spray to protect surfaces from contamination.

COVID AND ENGINEERING RESEARCH

Konstantin Soblev, Ph.D. Professor of Engineering discussed how his team of researchers are creating a spray to protect surfaces from contamination. The spray's coating repels and deactivates virus-laden droplets that are spread when people with COVID-19 speak, cough, or sneeze.

COVID AND FRESHWATER SCIENCES RESEARCH

Sandra McLellan, Ph.D. leads a team of School of Freshwater Sciences researchers working with the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District to learn more about COVID-19 by collecting and analyzing wastewater samples. This type of monitoring may provide early warnings of developing viral hotspots, which may be particularly useful as social distancing measures are relaxed.

COVID AND SOCIOECONOMIC RESEARCH

Joel Rast, Ph.D., Director of the UWM Center for Economic Development is examining the spread of COVID-19 in Milwaukee County with research that has shown African-American residents have been far more affected by the disease than the county's white population. The study found that while 13% of the county's population lives in census tracts that are at least 75% African American, those tracts accounted for 26% of confirmed coronavirus cases as of April 8.

2. Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) Update on Its "Focus Forward" Pandemic Recovery Effort

WEDC Secretary and CEO Missy Hughes highlighted initiatives encompassed in the agency's Focus Forward initiative designed to accelerate pandemic remediation and recovery efforts for business and industry of all sizes across Wisconsin. Since March, WEDC has deployed

\$7 million to 800 businesses. The agency is currently rolling out the “We Are All In” initiative which provides \$2,500 grants to qualifying businesses with fewer than 20 employees. In all, the WEDC expects to distribute \$75 million in grants to state businesses based on federal funds which are being made available for recovery efforts in Wisconsin.

Secretary Hughes discussed how nearly every corner of the state has been hit by the effects of the pandemic. She mentioned the importance of taking a wholistic view of such things as community, people, innovation, and access to critical support, including high-speed broadband.

She highlighted the enduring partnership between the UW System and WEDC and noted ongoing efforts to develop and sustain a broad range of collaborations and initiatives; these efforts support innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic development both on and off campus. Finally, she discussed WEDC’s efforts to prepare a report to be delivered to the Legislature by June 30 which will outline additional recommendations to support recovery of the state’s urban and rural industries across all 72 counties.

3. University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Research Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

UW-Madison Chancellor Rebecca Blank and UW-Madison Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education Steve Ackerman provided an overview of the substantial range of activities UW-Madison researchers are engaged in to address the impacts of COVID-19. Vice Chancellor Ackerman noted that a total of 220 COVID-related projects are currently under way at UW-Madison.

COVID research at UW-Madison spans a wide spectrum of disciplines and much of the required data analysis and reporting efforts continue during the campus shutdown. In many instances, off campus work and videoconferences are helping to maintain productivity and progress. He reported that UW-Madison is entering “Phase 1” of its multi-stage plan to reboot research conducted on campus.

Through the summer semester, approximately \$212 million in revenue loss and additional expenses due to COVID will accrue across UW System,

with \$118 million of that amount attributed to UW-Madison alone. Research makes up almost a quarter of that loss at \$30 million.

Funding partners at the flagship campus include federal agencies such as the National Institutes of Health, WARF, the School of Medicine and Public Health, and the Evjue Foundation.

Highlighting one specific COVID-19 research project, Dr. David O'Connor, Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health discussed his collaborative research to study the virus and to create opportunities to test new vaccines and antivirals.

c. The meeting was adjourned at 10:16 a.m.