

BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM

**Research, Economic Development, &  
Innovation Committee**

Webex Videoconference

Thursday, February 4, 2021

8:45 a.m. –10:00 a.m.

- A. Call of the Roll
- B. Declaration of Conflicts
- C. Approval of the Minutes of the December 10, 2020 Meeting of the Research, Economic Development, and Innovation Committee
- D. UW-Madison – Continuing Research Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic
- E. Business and University Perspectives on Generating Vibrant and Sustainable Economic Growth Through Innovative Health and Wellness Initiatives

February 4, 2021

**UW-MADISON – CONTINUING RESEARCH RESPONSE  
TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**REQUESTED ACTION**

Information only.

**SUMMARY**

UW–Madison researchers continue to be on the forefront of fighting COVID-19 by studying the virus from different angles and disciplines. To date, UW–Madison has more than 70 funded research projects aimed at addressing the impacts of COVID-19.

**Presenters**

- Steve Ackerman, Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education
- Song Gao, Assistant Professor of Geography, Department of Geography
- Nasia Safdar, Professor of Medicine, School of Medicine and Public Health

**BACKGROUND**

UW–Madison Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education Steve Ackerman will provide an overview of the substantial and broad range of research activities UW-Madison researchers are engaged in to address impacts of COVID-19. The following UW–Madison researchers will join him:

- Song Gao, Assistant Professor of Geography, Department of Geography. His presentation is titled “Mapping Human Mobility and Close Contact Changes for Geospatial Modeling of COVID-19 Spread.”
  - Professor Gao directs the Geospatial Data Science Lab at UW–Madison. His main research interests include Geospatial Data Science and Geospatial Artificial Intelligence, as well as interdisciplinary studies.

- Nasia Safdar, Professor of Medicine, in the School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH). Her presentation is titled “Preventing COVID-19 in the Healthcare Systems.”
  - Professor Safdar is a faculty member in the Division of Infectious Disease within SMPH and holds affiliate appointments in the Department of Population Health and the Division of Geriatrics, as well as the Division of Industrial and Systems Engineering. She is Vice Chair for Research in the Department of Medicine and the Medical Director of Infection Control at UW Hospital and Clinics.

Professor Gao will discuss his collaborative research to map human mobility to give public health agencies and researchers a way to gauge where people are responding to orders designed to keep them from speeding transmission of the virus. With data pooled from cell phones, Gao’s Geospatial Data Science Lab is mapping travel.

Professor Safdar has helped lead UW Health’s response to COVID-19 and assisted local officials in explaining the pandemic to the media and public. She is leading a study to evaluate COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness in health care personnel, and a study looking at whether commonly used oral and nasal antiseptic (in addition to personal protective equipment and hand hygiene) can help prevent COVID-19 infections in frontline healthcare workers.

February 4, 2021

**BUSINESS AND UNIVERSITY PERSPECTIVES ON GENERATING  
VIBRANT AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH  
THROUGH INNOVATIVE HEALTH AND WELLNESS INITIATIVES**

**REQUESTED ACTION**

Information only.

**SUMMARY**

The pandemic has increased overall awareness of the importance and benefits of personal health and wellness. One potential silver lining of COVID has been an increase in outdoor activities and recreational pursuits and a renewed focus on the value of healthy lifestyles. In Wisconsin, auto traffic reductions have been widely recorded, while biking and other outdoor leisure activities are enjoying significant upturns, even with the onset of winter.

The Governor's Bicycle Coordinating Council points out that continued investment in and support of bicycling can help to improve the health of Wisconsin communities in both physical and economic terms. At the same time and amid the pandemic, university researchers and health practitioners are expanding community-based health support networks to increase the availability and access to wellness and prevention measures.

REDI Chair Bob Atwell will introduce the health and wellness/economic discussion. Saris Founder and CEO Chris Fortune will highlight his Madison-based company's efforts to replace fossil-fuel delivery systems with pedal power. He will also describe its focus on building resiliency and self-confidence in underserved youth by helping them to experience the joy of biking. Saris' goal is to replace screen time with bike time.

UW-Milwaukee's Provost Johannes Britz will provide an overview of UW-Milwaukee's urban research setting as a "lab for learning" that sets the stage for improving the quality of life and health of all city residents. UWM's Silver Spring Nursing Center Director and a UWM student practitioner will discuss outreach and volunteer efforts to reach underserved neighborhoods in Milwaukee.

## **Presenters**

- Bob Atwell, REDI Committee Chair
  - Chris Fortune, Saris Founder and CEO
  - Mike Basarich, Saris Director of Infrastructure
  - Jean Bell-Calvin, MS, RN, PHCNS-BC, UW-Milwaukee Clinical Assistant Professor/Nursing Center Director
  - Johannes Britz, UW-Milwaukee Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
  - Morgan Jenswold, UW-Milwaukee Senior, College of Health Sciences
  - Lauren Mortimer, UW-Milwaukee Senior, Communication Sciences and Health Disorders
- (In lieu of presenting, Lauren has provided a statement included with this agenda.)

## **BACKGROUND**

Working with university and community researchers, Madison-based Saris, a biking and urban transportation innovator, has determined that the number of children between ages six and 17 who ride bicycles in Wisconsin has regularly decreased from 2014 to 2018, while “screen time” for the same age group has increased to seven hours each day.

Saris believes that being outside contributes to increased mental health. Additionally, the company is working with Wisconsin communities to improve bikeways and to develop bike parks that further provide increased safety and make it easier to go biking.

UW-Milwaukee, Wisconsin’s urban research university, offers a wide range of community-based research and support services that contribute to wellness and community health. Collectively, these resources represent a significant set of economic drivers that foster and sustain healthy lifestyles and working environments for all Wisconsin residents.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- A) UW-Milwaukee Student Lauren Mortimer Statement on Service Learning

**Student Statement on Service Learning  
Lauren Mortimer, UW-Milwaukee Senior, Studying  
Communication Sciences and Disorders**



My name is Lauren Mortimer. This spring, I will graduate from UW-Milwaukee with my degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders and then pursue graduate school in Wisconsin.

Last semester, through my Survey of Adult Neurogenic Language and Speech Disorders Course, I took part in a unique service learning experience that opened my eyes to adult neurology, helped fortify my commitment to the community of Milwaukee, and provided me with skills I can use in grad school and beyond. I had the opportunity to work with adults at "ReCharge!" which is an adult day program. This program combines controlled lifestyle choices along with regular physical and mental exercises to support memory for adults in the greater Milwaukee area.

ReCharge! fills a gap in services for people with mild cognitive issues by providing a virtual class that focuses on remediating mental speed, language retrieval, and problem solving. I assist the director of this program by attending weekly classes, coming up with activities, and maintaining the open and fun environment for learning through classroom management skills. I was able to teach almost an entire class on music and the brain. While conducting a fun activity at the end of that session, I sang and played my guitar for the participants as they guessed the popular songs I played. This helped work their brains in a fun, novel, and exciting way.

Service learning with ReCharge! provided me with a different perspective on a new age group of individuals, as much of my work experience has been with children. Further, the Ovation Jewish Home and the ReCharge! program were very grateful for my help and

expressed the desire to have more volunteers in the future due to the great success we had this semester.

The participants looked forward to my attendance every Tuesday, and I continued attending classes through winter break after the required paperwork was turned in because it was such a fun and enlightening experience. Overall, the impact service learning had on myself, the participants of the program, and the community of Milwaukee was well worth the time I spent at my service-learning placement.

I would encourage anyone and everyone to find a learning experience such as this because it not only helps the individuals you are working with, but also cultivates a sense of community for the City of Milwaukee, promotes skills related to interprofessional communication, and helps fortify one's commitment to UW-Milwaukee by being a representative of the university in this placement.