

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

Thursday, December 9, 2021  
UW-Madison and WebEx Videoconference

REDI Vice Chair Cris Peterson called the meeting to order at 10:46 a.m.

Regents Héctor Colón, Rodney Pasch, and Brianna Tucker 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 7, 2021, meeting**

The minutes of the October 7, 2021, REDI Committee meeting were unanimously approved on a motion by Regent Colón and seconded by Regent Pasch.

**b) UW-Madison: Driving Human Health Advances Through Groundbreaking Biotechnology Research**

Chancellor Rebecca Blank made opening remarks stating the COVID impact was significant for the university, closing many labs and classrooms. Despite this, researchers moved quickly to learn more about the disease and how to treat it. She said the university has been awarded more than \$100 million in research money to advance COVID research. Committee members heard from UW-Madison presenters who led the second in a series of important research updates begun at the October REDI Committee meeting.

December's discussion highlighted the innovative ways the UW-Madison flagship is pioneering new approaches to health and wellness. Dr. David Beebe highlighted his research on cancer diagnostics with the goal of improving in-clinic treatment decisions. One unique aspect of his approach is the use of primary cells taken from the patient's own tumor tissue. He said this analysis of these cells helps personalize therapeutic treatments and improve patient outcomes. Because of efforts like this, patients in many cases today benefit from hundreds of custom types of cancer treatment options compared to only a handful of general approaches a few years ago. Regent Tucker asked if Dr. Beebe's research has advanced far enough along for use in treating patients. He said his work is still in the trial and pre-approval stage.

Presenter Dr. David O'Connor, talked about leveraging research to improve the health of Wisconsinites throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. He described how he uses advanced genomic tools to track the virus through space and time in settings for both human populations and on farms with animal herds. Dr. O'Connor and his colleagues have also conducted research focused on making Wisconsin schools safer for in-person instruction through the innovative use of air-filtration detection for COVID.

Chancellor Blank pointed out that research coming from these efforts and from other talented faculty experts leads to advances in both known and in surprising new avenues. She noted the totality of these efforts across UW-Madison has led to the creation of a COVID Wikipedia-type resource which is becoming an invaluable reference for researchers worldwide.

Vice Chancellor Steve Ackerman mentioned that UW-Madison is a powerhouse of research across a broad range of disciplines, making it a highly effective hub for innovation and entrepreneurship. He noted that UW-Madison ranks number one in the Big 10 for biotechnology research and number 12 nationally. While these numbers are generally well-known, Regent Peterson said the UW System can and should do more to publicize its strengths as an innovative research leader and economic driver.

From a policy perspective, Regent Pasch inquired how REDI could further facilitate additional significant research advances. Chancellor Blank and her team quickly pointed out the need to streamline the university's onerous approval process for grant funding. Committee members learned UW-Madison is preparing a plan to address this concern, and the REDI Committee pledged to work with colleagues on the Business & Finance Committee to expedite a more streamlined process in 2022.

c) **University-Industry Leadership Panel: Honing Wisconsin's Competitive Edge for Ultimate Success in the Competition for Funds to Support the Growth of Technology Hubs Across the U.S. Heartland**

Wisconsin Technology Council President Tom Still moderated a panel with university and industry leaders who discussed the "game-changing" opportunity for Wisconsin to benefit from anticipated federal funding to support a new series of technology hubs envisioned across the U.S. heartland. The panelists, represented by WARF, the UWM Research Foundation, and Rockwell Automation, echoed thoughts similar to those outlined by Tommy Thompson in an Op-Ed on the same topic published earlier in the week.

The focus is on a bipartisan bill President Biden is expected to sign early in 2022 that could jumpstart the nation's investment in research. Based on experience working with university researchers, panelist and technology expert Dave Vasko observed that his company, Rockwell Automation, has greatly benefited by sourcing talent from UW System and especially through the Connected Systems Institute (CSI) partnership Rockwell has with UWM. Vasko said this effort and others allow Rockwell to more effectively mentor and train the next generation of leaders and innovators. From his perspective, the scientists and innovators throughout the University of Wisconsin System are well-poised to capitalize on this anticipated federal funding opportunity.

The pending legislation requires applicants to work on their strengths and to collaborate broadly across traditional boundaries. Each hub is expected to reflect one or more core areas of focus and will reflect durable and effective collaborations among universities, the private sector, and government partners. Tom Still encouraged the REDI Committee to help ensure all interested parties across the state work together to achieve success in attracting federal funds to Wisconsin. He said Wisconsin will need to highlight its broad and deep strengths in key areas such as biotechnology and genomics, advanced manufacturing, and artificial intelligence and machine learning.

Regent Peterson encouraged Tom and his panelists to work with REDI Committee members and other key stakeholders to ensure alignment of messaging and full engagement in this conversation both across Wisconsin and in Washington, D.C.

Regent Peterson thanked the presenters and adjourned the meeting at 12:05 p.m.