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Technology Entrepreneurship Office
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

the STARTUP STREAM

connecting ideas, people & opportunities

Message from the director

Bonnie Bachman
Director of TEO

Dear colleagues, partners, and students,

With the summer sun shining bright, fresh ideas are blooming at the Technology Entrepreneurship Office (TEO). This season invites reflection, exploration, and growth—and we're thrilled to see students embracing that spirit as they push the boundaries of research and innovation.

In this issue of *The Startup Stream*, we're spotlighting the inspiring ways graduate students have leveraged TEO's resources to nurture their ideas and transform them into impactful ventures.

Whether you're in the lab, out on the lake, or somewhere in between, summer is full of possibility. We're here to support you as you explore, experiment, and take the next step in your innovation journey.

Wishing you a season of growth and discovery,
Bonnie

Featured story

EMILY BICK

Turning cutting-edge insect research into innovative products that make a difference beyond the lab.

Emily Bick, a UW–Madison researcher, is transforming pest control with the Insect Eavesdropper—a leaf-clipped sensor that detects insect activity through vibrations and machine learning. Developed with computer science grad student Dev Mehrotra, the device helps farmers monitor pests without damaging crops. With support from UW's TEO and the NSF I-Corps™ program, the innovation has gained national attention, funding, and global collaborators. Bick's work not only advances sustainable agriculture but also empowers graduate students through hands-on entrepreneurship.

More about Emily

Entrepreneurship in action

Before TEO launched, Professor Dan van der Weide was already advancing UW–Madison's legacy of innovation. In a recent conversation, we asked him five questions about his research, startup experience, and what's next. From developing life-saving microwave ablation technology to mentoring students in wireless systems and chip-scale sensing, Dan is shaping the future of engineering. He sees TEO as a powerful platform for helping students move ideas beyond the lab—into the world.

Read the full Q&A

Startups help faculty & grad students win

Amani Gilette and Phill Huss found more than just research opportunities—they found a launchpad for their ambitions. Working closely with faculty mentors Melissa Skala and Vatsan Raman, they began translating their scientific discoveries into real-world solutions. In a recent conversation with TEO, they opened up about the challenges and triumphs of navigating commercialization, building startups from scratch, and growing into confident scientific leaders. Their stories are a testament to how curiosity, mentorship, and the university's vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem can empower Badgers to turn bold ideas into lasting impact.

Read the full Q&A

Do you think like an entrepreneur?

Graduate students at UW–Madison are uniquely positioned to turn research into real-world solutions. The TEO champions an entrepreneurial mindset—one that values **curiosity, creativity,** and **action**. It's not just about launching startups; it's about recognizing opportunities, solving problems, and creating value in any field.

Want to start thinking like an entrepreneur? This article will help you learn how to identify impact, communicate beyond academia, and move ideas forward with purpose.

Read the full story

Upcoming events

Free Virtual Workshop:
2025 UW–Madison NSF I-Corps Fall Cohort
Join the six-week virtual NSF I-Corps workshop to learn LaunchPad concepts, customer discovery, and commercialization strategies. **Apply by September 18.**

Register

DEFEAT THE ODDS

Innovate to Impact:
Fetch's Defeat the Odds Pitch Competition
Do you have a research idea with startup potential? Submit it to the Second Annual Defeat the Odds Pitch Competition by Fetch and win up to $15,000 in cash prizes. **Apply by July 23.**

Get more details

BADGER STARTUP SUMMIT

Forward Festival Event
Kick off Forward Fest at Badger Startup Summit—hosted by 100 State & UW-Madison TEO—with talks, networking, and the interactive MERLIN Pitch & Replay. **Free with RSVP!**

Reserve your spot

Pathways to Impact

Free Webinars
July - September 2025

Platform Technology Assessment Workshop
Designed for innovators who have developed breakthrough and/or early-stage technologies.
July 21
10am - 1pm ET

Technology Commercialization Pathways
Designed for university-affiliated individuals eager to explore and better understand the world of technology commercialization.
September 9
1pm - 2pm ET

Unlocking Innovation with the Great Lakes I-Corps Hub
An insightful overview of the NSF and Great Lakes Hub I-Corps programs, followed by a Q&A session.
September 18
1pm - 2pm ET

Project Management and Leadership
Explores project management skills and how they can help you in your academic and professional career.
September 25
1pm - 2pm ET

NSF I-CORPS HUB
GREAT LAKES REGION

Click to register online

Explore the commercialization potential of your STEM innovations with NSF I-Corps programs!

Learn more

Graduate student spotlight

AUDEN KRAUSKA

PhD Student at UW–Madison

Research doesn't stop at discovery—it drives change. Auden Krauska, a PhD student in Statistics at UW–Madison, is applying that principle through her work at the intersection of data science and entrepreneurship. Auden's research examines how AI technologies address real-world challenges and inform practical solutions. Her journey reflects the Wisconsin Idea in action: using knowledge to improve lives, spark innovation, and shape a better future.

How did customer discovery during your NSF I-Corps experience influence your understanding of the real-world challenges AI technologies face?

"Validation" has many different meanings, and we would not have known this without talking to customers! As a statistician, I believe we have some excellent ideas about how to validate AI/LLM output statistically, but customers are concerned about more than just an accuracy rate. Is their use of AI defendable to their bosses and regulators? Is the increased speed of responses compared to humans doing the work actually helpful in their current workflow?

What role has TEO and the NSF I-Corps program played in helping you think about your research through an entrepreneurial lens?

Incredibly helpful! We learned a great deal about how to price our product and transition from a consulting-style customer relationship to a more profitable service.

How does entrepreneurship relate to your core values? And what is it about entrepreneurship that inspires you?

Creating a business as an academic is the ultimate freedom. I can pursue the research that I would like to and see it come to fruition in actual clients.

Is there anything you would like to share with prospective graduate students who are interested in entrepreneurship?

If you think you have the grit, go for it! It's as easy as—and as hard as—talking to strangers.

Has TEO helped influence your entrepreneurship learning and experience?

Absolutely! We are grateful for all the connections and education we received while applying for funding.

Are you a UW–Madison alum or Wisconsin-based entrepreneur?

We want to hear your story! Help us celebrate the spirit of innovation that powers our community by sharing your high-tech small business commercialization or research journey. Selected stories will be featured in our newsletter to inspire the next generation of changemakers.

Submit your story

Stay ahead with The Startup Stream!

Join our community of innovators and entrepreneurs. Subscribe now to get the latest insights, opportunities, and stories from the UW–Madison TEO delivered directly to your inbox.

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