

the STARTUP STREAM

connecting ideas, people & opportunities

Message from the director

Do you ever wonder what it takes to go from lab bench to launch pad?

In this issue of *The Startup Stream*, we're exploring how students and faculty at UW-Madison turn bold ideas into thriving startups—with sharp business models, fearless experimentation, and the kind of trusted mentorship that makes it all possible.

Whether you're a student, faculty member, industry professional, or simply curious about the journey from concept to company, you'll discover inspiring stories of campus entrepreneurs, expert tips to sharpen your strategy, and upcoming events to fuel your next big idea. I invite you to dive in, get inspired, and help us celebrate the tech innovation happening right here at UW-Madison!

Your entrepreneurship champion,
Bonnie



Bonnie Bachman
Director of TEO

Featured story



BUSINESS MODEL CANVAS

with Director Dan Olszewski

Dan Olszewski, director of the Weinert Center for Entrepreneurship, shares how student founders can use the Business Model Canvas to turn tech ideas into real ventures. With decades of experience—from McKinsey to startup acquisitions—he explains how this nine-box framework helps clarify your value proposition, test assumptions, and pivot with confidence.

For students in TEO and beyond, Olszewski's advice is clear: start with your customer, stay flexible, and use the canvas to communicate your business—not just your technology.

[Learn more about the model](#)

Entrepreneurship in action

Laboratory testing delays and inconsistencies aren't usually a good thing. But sometimes, those very frustrations can cause innovation to spark. UW-Madison Mechanical Engineering PhD graduate and 3D Powder Tech startup co-founder Luis Izet Escaño Vázquez talks startup formation, product development, and how to shift between being a researcher and an entrepreneur.

[More about 3D Powder Tech](#)



A food science startup story



In America's dairyland, it's no wonder that UW-Madison spinoff Galasys has made a marketable product out of dairy waste. Chemical Engineering professor and co-founder George Huber discusses the science of turning lactose into sweetener and shares his best advice for young entrepreneurs hoping to take their innovations from the lab to the market.



[More about Galasys](#)

Transcend UW launches strong



In early September, undergraduate student entrepreneurship organization **Transcend UW** hosted over 250 attendees at their inaugural Kickoff Event. Transcend is a collaborative, interdisciplinary group that aims to highlight the many ways to be an entrepreneur on campus. The event brought together many of the amazing entrepreneurial programs at UW into one common space—which Transcend president Sid Singh says is key to startup success.

[More about Transcend UW](#)

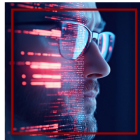
Upcoming events



Wisconsin Governor's Business Plan Contest

This contest is your gateway to funding, mentorship, and statewide recognition. Mark your calendars and practice your pitch—Wisconsin's biggest startup contest returns soon!

[Learn more](#)



NSF I-Corps™ Spring Cohort Learning Session

Learn about the full spectrum of NSF I-Corps opportunities—local, regional, and national—and how they support students translating discoveries into market-ready solutions.

Join us on November 6, 2025!

[Register](#)



Transcend UW

Student organization, Transcend, is UW's largest student-run innovation competition, offering mentorship, funding, and exposure. It's a launchpad for bold ideas—perfect for students eager to build, pitch, and make an impact.

[Learn more](#)

Pathways to Impact

Free Webinars
October–November 2025



Partners with Industry

Building industry partnerships—strategies, challenges, and relationship tips.

October 23
10am - 1pm ET



Funding STEM Innovations

Funding strategies for deep-tech commercialization—covering options, barriers, and success tips.

October 30
1pm - 2pm ET



Intellectual Property and Working with Your Tech Transfer Office

Working with university tech transfer offices to commercialize research and IP.

November 13
1pm - 2pm ET



[Click to register online](#)



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

[Learn more](#)

Mentor spotlight

ROBERT WALKER

High-tech CEO and venture capitalist



Robert Walker, a high-tech CEO with a PhD in Physics and 30 years of entrepreneurial experience, is the ideal mentor. His successful launch of three companies, expertise in international expansion, and ability to raise over \$100m in venture capital, all drawn from his research and business backgrounds, have guided over a dozen new entrepreneurs in building their own companies.

We asked Walker five questions to get a sense of his mentorship style and learn his top advice for up-and-coming entrepreneurs.

1) What experiences or influences in your career shaped your path toward entrepreneurship and mentoring early-stage innovators?

My entrepreneurship journey has been a long and multi-staged process. It all began with my first industry job, where I was introduced to the concepts of "employee stock options" and "equity." This journey led me to roles as a start-up CEO and a venture capitalist. As a young professional, I admired the senior venture capitalists who seemed to possess a science of building a company. Now, I've come to realize that my experiences, while not identical to theirs, have given me the ability to recognize patterns and see over the horizon. This skill is not reserved for a select few, but can be developed by any first-time entrepreneur.

2) From your own startup journey, what was the most valuable lesson you learned that you now share with the teams you mentor?

It's all about the people. People are essential to company success. Finding the right person for the job, at the right time for the company, is key to a company's success. And how the team works together will make or break your "company culture." That topic is a real passion of mine. You've got to be brutally honest with yourself about these things, because it's the key to your personal and professional growth. Without this self-awareness, you risk incurring many unnecessary and self-inflicted wounds along your journey.

3) How would you describe your approach to mentoring I-Corps teams, and what do you hope founders take away from working with you?

Listen and understand the opportunity that lies before them. Figure out what they are passionate about, identify their needs, and then find out how to fill those gaps. As far as what they take away, that is the most complex problem and boils down to a few fundamental principles. It all goes back to what we learned in kindergarten, but actually living those basic principles is a lot harder than people think.

4) If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring entrepreneurs just starting their journey, what would it be?

Make certain that the opportunity that you are pursuing aligns with your skills and your passions, and be honest with yourself in assessing that. If they do, you will enjoy the journey for its own sake and be able to put in the extreme efforts necessary to work towards success. And ultimately, you have a chance to succeed. And hopefully, in the end, you won't have regrets about starting the journey in the first place.

5) What advice would you give to students engaged with TEO?

UW-Madison is increasingly building up an ecosystem to support and encourage entrepreneurs. Learn what resources are available at the university, and leverage them as much as you can. This is a journey you should never start alone, even if it can be lonely at times. You'll be amazed at how many problems you will encounter on this journey that somebody has solved before. It's a lot less painful (and cheaper!) to learn from others' mistakes rather than your own. Utilize this as often as possible.

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

We want to hear your story! Help us celebrate our community of innovation by sharing your high-tech small business commercialization or research journey. Selected stories will be featured on the website and 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.

[Subscribe Now](#)



follow us on
LINKEDIN



Technology
Entrepreneurship Office
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Technology Entrepreneurship Office

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
1550 Engineering Drive I, Madison, WI 53706

