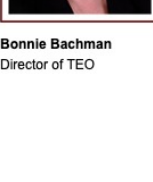




the Startup Stream

Connecting ideas, people, and opportunity

Spring is the quintessential season of renewal. How is the University of Wisconsin-Madison manifesting this energy to prepare the next generation of leaders and entrepreneurs?



Bonnie Bachman
Director of TEO

In this issue of *The Startup Stream*, we talk with up-and-coming UW entrepreneurs who are turning cutting-edge innovations into successful ventures—each of whom has leveraged TEO support, guidance, and networks. From exciting startup stories and the newest NSF I-Corps™ cohort to expert mentor advice, learn about how to go against the flow and match opportunities to your individual goals.

Above all, I hope this issue inspires you to keep seeking the many pathways to entrepreneurial development that this campus provides.

Wishing you a season of renewed ideas and energy.

Bonnie

2025 NSF I-Corps™ year in review

\$12M+
raised by UW I-Corps alumni startups

500+
participants engaged across 16 events

5 national teams supported

from **13** universities



Our I-Corps program just wrapped its biggest year yet!

We set a record for participation, established new commercialization pathways, and had huge startup successes, topping \$12M. See how the program expanded across the UW System and accelerated innovators from idea to impact.

[Read more](#)

Meet the 2025 National I-Corps™ Teams

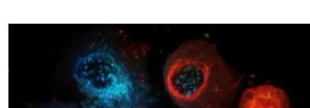
The NSF I-Corps Teams program helps researchers turn innovations into real-world solutions through hands-on training and industry mentorship.

Facilitated by the TEO, UW-Madison's national I-Corps program equips participants with the skills, network, and resources to commercialize their ideas. We are proud that our 2025 cohort brings forward bold innovations across AI, agriculture, healthcare, manufacturing, and digital diagnostics. Here are the five teams that made tremendous strides toward translating campus research into real-world impact:



Statistical Framework for Language Model Outputs (Roho, Krauska, Mendez)

A new statistical method that assigns calibrated confidence scores to AI-generated outputs—advancing safer, more trustworthy AI for high-stakes fields like healthcare and finance.



Soil Electrochemical Sensing (Andrews, Chen, Huang)

Real-time, in-soil sensors that measure plant-available nitrate at the root zone, empowering farmers to optimize fertilization with precision.



Non-invasive Cell Imaging (Hernandez, Fernandes, Diaz)

A radiolabeling platform that enables direct, quantitative imaging of therapeutic cells—accelerating progress in cell-based treatments for diseases like cancer.



Powder Spreadability Testing (Chen, Escano Volquez, Zhang)

A particle-level quality control device for metal 3D printing, improving safety and repeatability for aerospace, medical, and automotive manufacturing.



Chronic Pain Diagnostics (Kim)

A digital phenotyping tool using linguistic and metabolic analysis plus machine learning to identify chronic pain patterns—improving diagnosis and reducing risks surrounding miscommunication and opioid dependence.

[More about the 2025 National Teams](#)

FerroMx is powering next-gen batteries



I-Corps Alum Dr. Jiajie Sui is the Next Gen Entrepreneur for Next Gen Batteries

NSF I-Corps alum and Early Career Entrepreneur-in-Residence Dr. Jiajie Sui is helping accelerate the future of "next-gen" batteries through her startup FerroMx. Alongside PI Xudong Wang (MSE), Sui is commercializing a ferroelectric separator membrane that suppresses dendrites—metallic growths that can cause battery failure. The technology boosts efficiency by 20%, improves safety, and extends battery life for applications from EVs to renewable energy storage.

Sui's entrepreneurial path began during her MSE PhD at UW-Madison and was shaped by MEB, I-Corps, and now the EER program at the Badger Tech Foundry. Today she's advancing FerroMx toward an MVP, fundraising, and preparing for market launch. Her journey shows how UW-Madison empowers researchers to turn high-impact materials innovations into real-world solutions.

[More about FerroMx](#)



Pictured from left to right: Keany Morris, Mai Nguyen, and Deeksha Singh.

Deeksha Singh Wins NFLPA Analytics Competition

TEO student assistant and Wisconsin School of Business MBA Ambassador Deeksha Singh and her team took home the graduate division win and \$12,000 prize in the NFLPA's 2025-26 Analytics Case Competition. Their project analyzed how "red flag games"—short rest paired with long-distance travel—affect player stress and performance. Singh shared insights on lacking an open-ended challenge, building a cross-disciplinary team, and finding the conditions to thrive in entrepreneurship and life.

[Read the Interview](#)

Incubate your startup with Transcend UW



Transcend UW—campus's leading student-run entrepreneurship organization—is gearing up for its 11th annual pitch competition on April 16-17, 2026.

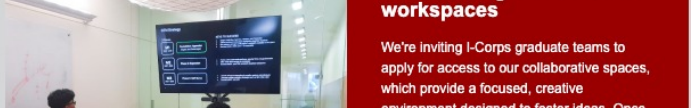
The annual pitch competition is Transcend's main event, and it has grown over the last 10 years. It boasts \$50k in prize money for individuals or teams with projects ready to fund, sponsored by an expanding entrepreneurial ecosystem in Wisconsin. The competition structure allows participants to build and refine their pitches over weeks of collaborative events, including an initial registration, an IP seminar, a project review session, and optional business models training.

The competition itself is hosted over two days—April 16th and 17th this year—in which all teams participate in a poster session and pitch placement round, and then placed based on performance for the second day's general, advanced, or top five tracks. The app Line Leap is a notable first-place winner from 2018's competition that has built a user base over the last seven years.

Transcend is always looking for sponsors for the competition. Sponsoring the pitch event is a unique opportunity for existing organizations to support early-stage entrepreneurs, promote their organization, and network with some of the best up-and-coming, collaborative innovators across the university.

By supporting Transcend, sponsors help students build the skills, confidence, and ventures that strengthen Wisconsin's innovation ecosystem.

[Support UW's Innovation future](#)



Now offering collaborative workspaces

We're inviting I-Corps graduate teams to apply for access to our collaborative spaces, which provide a focused, creative environment designed to foster ideas. Once approved, you'll gain access to an office suite with multiple desks, whiteboards for brainstorming, and access to a private conference room.

[Apply today](#)

Upcoming events

April 16-17, 2026
Transcend Pitch Competition
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](#)

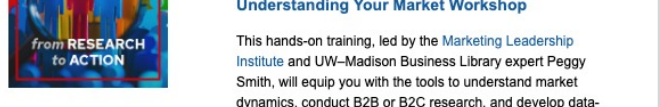
April 21, 2026 | 12:00 PM - 1:30 PM
NSF I-Corps™ Spring Cohort Learning Session
Join TEO and the Great Lakes NSF I-Corps Hub for a virtual information session about the full spectrum of NSF I-Corps opportunities and how they support students translating research discoveries into market-ready solutions.
[Register](#)

May 11, 2026 | 5:00 PM - 7:30 PM
FREE Workshop: From Research to Action: Understanding Your Market Workshop
This hands-on training, led by the Marketing Leadership Institute and UW-Madison Business Library expert Peggy Smith, will equip you with the tools to understand market dynamics, conduct B2B or B2C research, and develop data-driven market strategies. All designed
[Register](#)

June 25 - July 30, 2026 | 4:45 PM - 7:00 PM (on Thursdays)
FREE Virtual Workshop: NSF I-Corps™ Summer Cohort
Led by the UW-Madison local NSF I-Corps™ program, this 6-week workshop will help you take the first step toward achieving your entrepreneurial goals. Participants can earn a micro-grant and become eligible for larger programs, including the NSF National I-Corps™ Program (\$50k) and I-Corps Boost.
[Apply](#)

June 1-3, 2026 | 5:15 PM - 7:30 PM
FREE Workshop: Take control of your career with a Personalized Roadmap
Through engaging discussions and hands-on exercises with Andrew L. Shaffer, a strategist, business builder, and author of *Strategic ROADMAP: An Intentional and Memorable Approach to Achieving Success*. You'll gain the tools to confidently map out your career path and long-term goals.
[Register](#)

Spring forward with help from TEO
Whether you're a student, faculty member, or campus partner, TEO connects you with entrepreneurship trainings, informational events, mentorship, and collaboration opportunities to help bring your ideas to life.
[Learn more](#)



Meet Oliver Wiener TEO Advisor

Oliver Wiener is an entrepreneur and financier with expertise in the digital realm. He is the Founder and Managing Partner of Kensington Merchant Partners, an investment firm in the evolving financial and technological ecosystem. He was formerly a Portfolio Manager at Standard Investments and a founding partner at BTG, and is the founder of The Association of Digital Asset Markets. He graduated from UW-Madison with a dual major BA in International Relations and Political Science. He now sits on the Technology Entrepreneurship (TEO) Advisory Board and the College of Letters & Science Board of Visitors.

We asked Wiener five questions to learn about his career journey and get his advice for entrepreneurs who also want to be leaders.

1. What did your personal journey through entrepreneurship look like, and where are you today?

I started my first company on campus the summer before my sophomore year, in the mid-90s, called Wiz Kidz. Students had just started bringing personal computers to campus. Nobody really knew how to use them, but we did. We would set up people's computers when they moved in, charge for our installation services, and give them the TCP/IP packet and WinWorld for free. It was ironic in me to start that entrepreneurial experience in Madison and go through trials and tribulations. Today, I run a small business that is not in that same ecosystem. But the reason I ended up here has been about taking that desire not just to have a job, but to build a company while I'm building a career.

2. What drew you specifically to being involved in the leadership of TEO at UW-Madison?

Tom Erickson and Ian Robertson both helped create TEO as part of the drive to bring NSF funding and other programming to campus. I saw that as the gateway to supporting a larger entrepreneurial environment. There's a lot we produce at WARF and in the research university, but there's also an entire ecosystem of undergraduate entrepreneurialism. And it's the matching of the two in support of those journeys, which reflected my own journey and excited me to support and be a part of it.

3. As an advisory board member, what is your role, and what do you enjoy most about your involvement with TEO?

The people. The board, the TEO program, and our experience and responsibilities are ever-evolving, and these changes affect our roles in several ways. Regardless, I enjoy working with TEO's programming team, support staff, and other colleagues, for sure.

4. What was the most valuable lesson you learned from your own experience that you now bring to your leadership style?

Entrepreneurialism and leadership, in my opinion, are about passion. You can't teach somebody the desire to be an entrepreneur. In terms of my leadership style, my father used to say that, sometimes—or many times—it is actually the person who speaks the quietest who gets the room to listen. You need people not just to hear you, but to listen to you. That is how you become an effective leader.

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

Don't be afraid to hit the floor and get up. It's all about how you rebound. There are also many amazing entrepreneurial resources across campus in various forms. UW-Madison is a big place, and it can be daunting, but know that you can just start walking around and opening doors.

[More about Oliver](#)

Are you a UW-Madison 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.

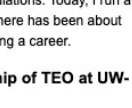
[Share your story with Bonnie](#)

Join the Startup Stream community!

We invite you to join our network of UW-Madison innovators and entrepreneurs

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