

## **Editorial: UW wants your ideas**

**The university's efforts to reach out and collaborate are necessary and commendable. But it needs to be more than just talk. The UW System will need to show results.**

From the Journal Sentinel

*Posted: Nov. 19, 2007*

Call it the Wisconsin Idea 2.0.

The University of Wisconsin is holding listening sessions around the state Nov. 27 to get ideas on how it can do a better job of bolstering the state's economy and its communities.

The state's universities have long played an integral role in helping shape the state's job base by doing what they do best: educating the next generation of workers. But universities have a broader role to play. University Research Park on Madison's west side, where a cluster of high-tech companies that germinated in UW labs has sprung up, is evidence of that.

More such cross-fertilization of university research and business know-how needs to be planted in other regions of the state.

The UW-Milwaukee growth initiative, which received \$8.4 million in seed money in the state budget just signed by Gov. Jim Doyle, is one example in southeastern Wisconsin. UWM has raised \$122 million for its capital campaign, surpassing its goal 18 months early, and announced last weekend that philanthropist Michael Cudahy had pledged an unspecified amount of money so UWM can buy land on the Milwaukee County Grounds in Wauwatosa for the Michael J. Cudahy Innovation Park, which would be the home of a new engineering school.

The new school, closely linked with businesses in southeastern Wisconsin, could be transformative. It's another sign, along with the campus' planned school of public health, that UWM is moving in the right direction.

Meanwhile, the Madison campus remains a national leader in many areas of research, but it should do a better job of commercializing its discoveries. It is the nation's third-largest research university but ranks lower on measures of converting ideas into actual companies and products.

The catalyst for the UW initiatives are disturbing demographic trends that include the loss of too many college-educated young people to jobs in other states. The goal is to reach consensus on priorities for the UW System among a large and often fractious group of stakeholders that includes business and community leaders, lawmakers and the governor.

The state as a whole, just like the Milwaukee region, will need such collaborative efforts if the economy is to grow. And UW will need to show that this is more than just talk.