

WEDC: UWM receives \$900,000 state grant for new institute

Posted on Monday, Dec 11, 2017

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

CONTACT: WEDC: Mark Maley, 608.210.6706, mark.maley@wedc.org
UWM: Michelle Johnson, 414.229.7490, John3453@uwm.edu

Dec. 11, 2017 — The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) has awarded a \$900,000 grant to the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee to support UWM's new Connected Systems Institute (CSI).

The institute will focus on ensuring that Wisconsin manufacturers can take advantage of opportunities created by the Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT), the interconnection of sensors and computing devices embedded at all levels of the system, enabling higher levels of efficiency and reliability and achieving lower cost. The center of excellence will be the first large-scale public-private partnership in the U.S. connecting industry, academic institutions, government and nonprofit organizations.

At the consumer level, commercials for smart appliances have shown us what the Internet of Things can do in our homes. Today, our refrigerators can tell our phones when we are running low on eggs or milk. The IIoT takes this concept and applies it to industrial processes, using sensors, data networks and data analytics for everything from supply chain to customers. CSI will apply this concept in an end-to-end approach from industrial processes to data network and analytics and to business enterprise.

CSI will establish test bed facilities, conduct research and develop educational programs. UWM is devoting more than 3,000 square feet of the east wing of its library to the first phase of the institute, with the option to expand by another 10,000 square feet. When fully operational, the Connected Systems Institute will

house state-of-the-art IIoT simulation lab facilities that will enable participating companies to test end-to-end production solutions, from suppliers to customers. The institute is expected to lead and support Wisconsin businesses in the next wave of the industrial revolution.

“We are excited to be on the forefront of this emerging technology that will be essential to businesses across the state,” said UWM Chancellor Mark Mone. “I am grateful to WEDC for recognizing how critical this project is to the health of Wisconsin’s manufacturing industry and for having the confidence in UWM to lead the way.”

“The Industrial Internet of Things represents what many consider to be the world’s next industrial revolution, and Wisconsin companies must be equipped to take advantage of the opportunities created by new technology,” said Mark R. Hogan, secretary and CEO of WEDC, the state’s lead economic development organization. “We applaud UWM for taking a leadership role in this key initiative, which will make Wisconsin a leader in bringing IIoT to the market for small and midsize manufacturers.”

The Connected Systems Institute is supported by a statewide consortium of industry groups, universities, businesses and economic development organizations. Planning began in January 2016, when UWM representatives met with a leadership team at Microsoft, whose CEO, Satya Nadella, is a UWM graduate.

The institute will build on existing collaborations between UWM’s College of Engineering & Applied Science and its Sheldon B. Lubar School of Business, along with other academic units at UWM and other UW System universities. By providing undergraduate, graduate, professional and executive education, research and programs, the institute will develop talent, expertise and solutions to lead companies to greater productivity through IIoT technologies and applications.

“Companies in Wisconsin really need help in this area,” said Adel Nasiri, associate dean for research and a professor in UWM’s College of Engineering & Applied Science. “The Connected Systems Institute will serve as a central point where industry representatives and scholars can collaborate on IIoT technologies.” Rockwell Automation is a founding member of the institute.

Kelly Armstrong, sector strategy development director for WEDC, believes the entire state will benefit from this institute. “The partnerships we’ve created with University

of Wisconsin System institutions across the state will ensure that businesses throughout Wisconsin have access to the Connected Systems Institute's experts and resources," she said.

Nasiri said the institute's curriculum will be developed as the lab is being built. Executive education program courses will be offered beginning in the spring of 2018. Planning for the master's degree program will also begin in the spring of 2018, and labs will open in the spring of 2019.

WEDC's investment in the institute, which will be used for educational, research and test bed application lab costs, is part of the organization's long-term strategy of advancing targeted, high-growth business clusters to develop high-quality jobs and significant job growth in Wisconsin. WEDC-supported centers of excellence—including the Global Water Center and the Energy Innovation Center—serve as cluster "anchors" around which educational R&D, corporate R&D and commercialization, external investment and company attraction connections are made.