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Editorial: Growing our own

With the state lagging its peers in key measures of economic health, the UW-Madison business school is correctly placing an emphasis on developing entrepreneurs.

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The renewed focus on developing entrepreneurs at the Wisconsin School of Business is an important ingredient for a state that needs more home cooking.

Incomes in Wisconsin lag the national average, making economic growth an imperative. But with the exception of communities like Hudson and Kenosha that border large metropolitan areas, most communities in Wisconsin traditionally haven't been able to attract companies from outside the state. That doesn't mean they shouldn't try, but realistically, most growth has to come from existing businesses - or by creating new ones.

Under the leadership of University of Wisconsin-Madison business school dean Michael Knetter, and with the strong support of UW's vast network of alumni, the school is trying to produce more graduates interested in starting companies.

Students on the Madison campus can now specialize in entrepreneurship at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. The undergraduate program began last year.

The business school also sponsors the G. Steven Burrill Business Plan contest, named for UW graduate and the chief executive of Burrill & Co., a San Francisco venture capital firm. The contest was won this year by Sky Vegetables (www.skyvegetables.com), a company run by students Keith Agoada and Troy Vosseller that uses hydroponics to grow produce atop grocery stores.

For the last two years, the school and John Morgridge, another UW grad and chair emeritus of Cisco Systems, has sponsored the week-long Wisconsin Entrepreneurship Bootcamp, which focuses on technology entrepreneurship for graduate students in chemistry, biology, engineering or other fields.

Beginning this fall, the campus is offering a living-learning community for would-be entrepreneurs in one of its dorms.

And all graduate business students will find a roomier Grainger Hall when they return for classes this fall, the result of a \$40.5 million addition that provides more space for career specialties.

Many other ingredients are needed to cook up a heartier stew of business activity in the state. That includes seed capital, including more networks of wealthy angel investors and a bigger commitment to business growth on the part of the state pension fund. But the focus on entrepreneurship at UW-Madison is a welcome effort that should help encourage young risk-takers who want to start businesses in Wisconsin.

What else can be done to encourage risk-taking and entrepreneurship in Wisconsin? To be considered for publication as a letter to the editor, e-mail your opinion to: [Journal Sentinel editorial department](#)

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