

Washington Research Foundation pledges \$1 million to Buerk Center for Entrepreneurship in the Foster School of Business

Endowment will create WRF Student Innovation Fund to support University of Washington competitions focusing on the development of future entrepreneurs



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/EINPresswire.com/ -- [Washington Research Foundation](#) (WRF) has pledged a \$1 million endowment to the [Buerk Center for Entrepreneurship](#) in the Foster School of Business to establish the WRF Student Innovation Fund. The award will provide perpetual support for

programs at the Buerk Center to enrich the student experience of entrepreneurship, including the Dempsey Startup Competition and the Holloman Health Innovation Challenge.

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Amy Sallin, director of the Buerk Center for Entrepreneurship

The Dempsey Startup is open to undergraduate and graduate students from the Cascadia Corridor of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Alaska and British Columbia, with the goal of providing real-world experience in entrepreneurship. Nearly 2,000 teams and 6,000 students have participated in the Dempsey Startup since it launched in 1998, with entrants gaining hands-on knowledge of assembling teams, developing business plans and

competing for prizes of up to \$25,000 by pitching their ideas to investors and experienced entrepreneurs. WRF has funded the program since 2001 and its staff members regularly participate as judges. A number of local, high-profile life sciences companies have come through the program, including A-Alpha Bio, Membrion and NanoString Technologies.

The Holloman Health Innovation Challenge (HIC) and prototype funding for teams who enter the Holloman Health Innovation Challenge have both received WRF support since their establishment in 2017. Prototype funding enables students from the Cascadia Corridor to apply for the capital required to develop working models for solutions to major health-related problems in the world, while the HIC provides the opportunity for the students to present their

solutions and their plans for creating a related business to judges in a collaborative but competitive environment. In March, UW's inSTENT Connection won the \$15,000 WRF Capital Grand Prize at the HIC for developing a stent that reduces the risk of complications following gastrointestinal tract surgery.

"The Buerk Center plays a unique role in offering entrepreneurial experience to college students in Washington and neighboring states," said Meher Antia, Ph.D., WRF's director of grant programs. "WRF has deep ties to the Center, and we're proud to provide

long-term support for these excellent programs at UW that aim to develop future generations of entrepreneurs trying to create much-needed, impactful products and services for the public."

"We're absolutely thrilled that WRF is not just continuing but expanding their support of student innovation at the University of Washington and the Foster School," said Amy Sallin, director of the Buerk Center for Entrepreneurship. "Our goals are aligned as one; develop and empower student entrepreneurs to ideate, innovate and launch impactful startups worthy of investment for the Greater Seattle ecosystem."

About Washington Research Foundation:

Washington Research Foundation (WRF) supports research and scholarship in Washington state, with a focus on life sciences and enabling technologies.

WRF was founded in 1981 to assist universities and other nonprofit research institutions in Washington with the commercialization and licensing of their technologies. WRF is one of the foremost technology transfer and grant-making organizations in the nation, having earned more than \$445 million in licensing revenue for the University of Washington and providing over \$131 million in grants to the state's research institutions to date.

WRF Capital, a reserve pool of funds for investing in early-stage Washington state companies, has backed 117 local startups since 1996. Returns from these investments support the Foundation's mission.

For additional information, please visit <https://www.wrfseattle.org/>.



Meher Antia of Washington Research Foundation.
Photo courtesy of Matt Hagen / Buerk Center for Entrepreneurship

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