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## **UW's new WE-REACH center to accelerate development of the 'most exciting' biomedical discoveries**

With \$4 million in matching funds from the National Institutes of Health, the University of Washington has created a new integrated center to match biomedical discoveries with the resources needed to bring innovative products to the public and improve health.

"The University of Washington and regional partner institutions produce some of the most exciting biomedical discoveries and technologies in the world, but we always find it challenging to support their product development as they move into the early commercialization phases," said the new center's executive director [Rodney Ho](#), a professor in the UW School of Pharmacy.

With well over a billion dollars in [research funding](#) annually, the University of Washington is an engine of discovery and generates more than [\\$15 billion](#) in the state's economy.

UW's newly funded Washington Entrepreneurial Research Evaluation and Commercialization Hub ([WE-REACH](#)), with an annual budget boosted to \$1.4 million by contributions from other partners, is organized to mentor and support biomedical entrepreneurs as well as provide project funding to fuel four to six biomedical startups a year with up to \$200,000 each.

Those projects will include innovative disease treatments, new drugs, diagnostics, genetic testing and health technologies. Ho said the center will support innovation steps not typically supported by research grants, such as human clinical trials or the development of and access to products.

In addition to the NIH, WE-REACH partners include the UW [Institute of Translational Health Sciences](#), [UW CoMotion](#), the [Institute for Protein Design](#) and the [School of Pharmacy](#). Innovators will receive guidance from multiple academic departments and regional institutions. Those institutions include the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Institute, Seattle Children's and other universities in the five states that make up the [WWAMI](#) region.

"We are delighted to welcome WE-REACH as a partner," said [Tong Sun](#), executive director of the Institute of Translational Health Sciences. "At ITHS we are committed to accelerating the translation of discoveries to the clinic. WE-REACH investigators will be able to leverage ITHS programs and resources, so they can help us in our mission to improve health in our communities. This is a very exciting area of translation that we are happy to support."

WE-REACH is one of five national commercialization [hubs](#) selected for funding by the NIH in 2019.

“The journey of biomedical discoveries to products that improve people’s health is expensive and risky. The process requires strategic investment of know-how as well as financial support from public-private partnerships,” said Ho.

“Spinning life science innovations out of research institutions requires expertise and funding that is hard to source in the academic environment,” adds [Fiona Wills](#), assistant vice president, innovation development at CoMotion, UW’s collaborative innovation hub. “WE-REACH builds on the infrastructure CoMotion has developed, including our gap fund and training, to provide critical resources needed to de-risk promising technologies into preclinical and clinical development.”

The new center will be located in the South Campus Center on the University of Washington’s Seattle campus and at the Institute of Translational Health Sciences in UW Medicine South Lake Union. It will be staffed by Professor Rodney Ho, Executive Director; Terri Butler, Associate Director of Outreach and Partnerships; Matthew Hartman, Coordinator; Christine Jonsson, Administrator; and new hires in project management and technology management roles.

For information on the new center and how to submit a grant proposal, please contact Matthew Hartman at [WEREACH@uw.edu](mailto:WEREACH@uw.edu) or 561-339-0676. The next round of grant funding requires a declaration of intent by Feb. 7 and complete submission by May 1.

**Announcement event:** On Jan. 31, WE-REACH Executive Director Rodney Ho will formally launch the new center at the ITHS quarterly All-hands meeting at UW Medicine’s South Lake Union campus, 850 Republican Street Seattle, in the Orin Smith Auditorium. The meeting starts at 8:30 a.m.

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