Housing the Welcome Center under the same roof as the Lubar Entrepreneurship Center means that the moment visitors step on campus to learn about UWM, they’re introduced to how entrepreneurship skills can be integrated into any area of study. The LEC’s vibrance also feeds into the Welcome Center’s various visit programs. These cater to a variety of prospective students, whether they’re coming straight from high school, transferring from another college or university, attending UWM as a military veteran or finishing a degree they started years ago. There is a UWM visit experience for everyone.

You can get more information or sign up for a tour online at uwm.edu/visit, by calling 414-229-2222, or by sending an email to undergraduateadmissions@uwm.edu.
INNOVATION LIVES AT NEW UWM LUBAR ENTREPRENEURSHIP CENTER

The Lubar Entrepreneurship Center and UWM Welcome Center officially opened in the spring of 2019. The 24,000-square-foot building offers a new gateway to UWM’s growing campus ecosystem. It also provides a focal point where UWM thinkers and makers can partner with businesses and the community to transform the regional economy. Center programming aims to make entrepreneurship an integral part of the UWM experience for all students and faculty.

“It’s not just for people who want to start a company,” says Brian Thompson, director of the LEC. “It’s not just for business majors. We believe that the skills in entrepreneurship, as well as training in creative and innovative thinking, are going to help make all our students more successful no matter what their career path.”

The LEC includes spaces where anyone in the community can work with UWM entrepreneurs on new enterprises. It also features classrooms, gathering spots for speakers and “innovation labs,” where students can prototype products and software.

The UWM Welcome Center hosts the Office of Undergraduate Admissions’ campus tours and visit programs. Housing the Welcome Center in the same facility as the LEC allows campus visitors to see students and UWM’s entrepreneurship programming in action. Funding for the building was launched by a $10 million donation from Lubar & Co. founder Sheldon Lubar and his wife, Marianne, in 2015. The UW System contributed $10 million to cover construction costs. More than $5 million in additional support has come from other donors, including the Kelben Foundation, established by Mary and Ted Kelber; Milwaukee entrepreneur Jerry Jendusa; Awi Shaked and Babs Waldman; We Energies; and American Family Insurance.

LEC training is not limited to business-related innovation. It improves problem-solving and information-gathering skills. It also helps innovators hone their idea creation process, as well as their testing and validation of business concepts.

Programs offered include pop-up workshops and interdisciplinary courses. There are also competitions in which students can win seed funding by pitting their ideas or business plans against others. Moreover, the LEC administers the only I-Corps site in Wisconsin. Backed by the National Science Foundation, I-Corps teaches faculty and graduate students to turn discoveries from their laboratories into products and startups. It’s open to teams from six area universities, and in the last three years, it has helped generate 19 startup companies.

ENTREPRENEURIAL PROGRAMS AT UWM

I-Corps
Supported by the National Science Foundation, the I-Corps program connects faculty and students with business mentors to help commercialize a research team’s ideas and discoveries. The Lubar Entrepreneurship Center administers Wisconsin’s only I-Corps site, which caters to teams from area universities. Using the proven I-Corps methodology, research teams embark on a process of discovering how to better connect with what customers want, then hone their ideas accordingly. Doing so helps accelerate the development of their ideas or products, with an eye toward gaining market share.

UWM Student Startup Challenge
More than 110 participants over the past seven years have completed this program, which encourages people to develop their ideas, launch businesses and gain skills that come from the entrepreneurial experience. It’s open to all UWM students, regardless of academic discipline, as well as alumni who have graduated within the past two years. Participants receive support and guidance throughout the program’s three phases, which includes coursework and team building as well as creating prototypes and business plans, with the ultimate goal of taking their ideas to market. They also focus on customer discovery through Student I-Corps work. Throughout the process, participants have opportunities to work with UWM faculty and staff as well as Milwaukee business professionals. Students can also receive funding from a pool of $25,000.

La Macchia New Venture Business Plan Competition
Creating a viable business plan is a crucial step toward developing a profitable endeavor. This competition guides students through the process of doing so with workshops and mentoring on topics such as marketing essentials, financial fundamentals and writing an eye-catching executive summary. The most promising plans are presented to a final judging panel, with awards given to the top three finishers in amounts of $8,000, $4,000 and $2,000.

James D. Scheinfeld Entrepreneurial Awards Competition
The Scheinfeld competition encourages business student entrepreneurship by helping launch new Wisconsin ventures and taking promising ideas to the marketplace. Entrepreneurs present their ideas and business plans to a panel of venture capitalists, business executives and educators, which select the ideas that are most viable and worth funding. Up to three winners are chosen each spring semester, with awards ranging from $5,000 to $15,000.