

## SKILD aims to improve odds of commercial success



Cleaner fuels, faster computers, and better healthcare. The specifics vary, but the market potential in these big ideas is universally great.

Meanwhile, the probability of transforming basic research into commercial success is shockingly small—nationwide, only about one in 10 university technologies generates any revenue. At WSU, a cross-college collaboration led by CAS intends to improve these odds for WSU innovations while providing opportunities for students to “get SKILD.”

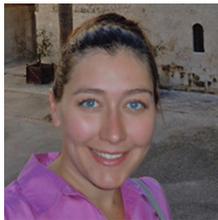
The Scholarly Knowledge, Innovation, and Leadership (SKILD at WSU) program promotes commercial development of WSU research and technologies while training students in the process of bringing innovations to market.



Brian Kraft



Svetlana Lockwood



Tracy Vrablik

SKILD brings together the entrepreneurial process of finding and developing a market and the academic process of populating gaps in knowledge.

“We’re employing technical students to serve as first-line commercialization evaluators,” said SKILD director Brian Kraft. “Non-business students gain hands-on experience in business development and industrially relevant opportunities to learn and directly advance WSU’s efforts in technology commercialization.”

The program began in fall 2013 with a group of six graduate student interns who possess a broad range of technical backgrounds. Each student was tasked with reviewing a set of recent inventions by WSU faculty, researching the relevant patent literature, and assessing possible applications to a commercial market.

From the initial 28 innovations they evaluated, three big ideas emerged at the top. These technologies could lead to cleaner and more accessible biofuel, faster and more efficient wireless computing, and safer and less-costly hospital care. Each invention holds tremendous potential benefits not only for WSU but for society at large.

“The feedback we receive from the SKILD interns helps to

inform our investment decisions,” said Sita Pappu, director of the WSU office of commercialization. “Their work has already served to uncover both overlooked opportunities and a few roadblocks.”

The students bring fresh perspective, distinct expertise, and new enthusiasm that has translated into productive results for WSU, Kraft said.

“I’m impressed with their work,” said Travis Woodland, director for business development in the College of Engineering and Architecture. “Since they are focused on only a few of WSU’s many inventions, the SKILD teams are able to provide a much deeper level of diligence than can typically be achieved for early-stage technologies.”

### DELIVERING DIVIDENDS

The program is yielding dividends for WSU and producing results for the interns, too.

“I chose a degree in the sciences because I wanted to make tangible contributions that make the world a better place. Through SKILD I am learning to look at technological innovation from a different point of view, one that helps bridge the significant gap between an invention and real life application,” said Svetlana Lockwood, a graduate student in computer science.

SKILD “There are very few training options out there for scientists interested in non-research careers. SKILD is providing direct experience and opening up new opportunities for me,” said Tracy Vrablik, a post-doctoral student in the School of Molecular Biology. “As soon as I put this on my résumé I started getting job interviews.”

### POWERFUL SYNERGY

“WSU is all about creating new knowledge, training students, and fueling economic development,” Kraft said. SKILD supports all three by providing a new avenue for faculty and students University-wide to think about how their work might translate into the private sector.

“Over time we hope to expand the SKILD program and to build stronger ties with the entrepreneurship programs on campus,” Kraft said. “There’s a powerful synergy, and we’re just getting started.”

