

PRESS RELEASE

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UW–Madison Tech Exploration Lab Hosts First-Ever Badger Build Fest, Showcasing Student Innovation in AI, Blockchain, and Venture Building

MADISON, Wis. — November 18, 2025 — The UW–Madison Tech Exploration Lab and Badger Blockchain hosted the inaugural Badger Build Fest on November 15–16, bringing together more than 140 students from across campus for a high-energy, 24-hour build sprint focused on AI, blockchain, and emerging technologies.

Over the course of the weekend, students collaborated on rapid prototypes, validated real-world problems, and pitched concepts with credible venture pathways. In total, \$6,500 in prizes were awarded across 16 winning teams spanning both the Cursor Venture Track and the Blockchain Track.

“Badger Build Fest brought out the best of what UW students do when they have space and support to build quickly and think boldly,” said Sandra Bradley, Executive Director of the Tech Exploration Lab. “This event blended hands-on creation with rapid venture-building — and the momentum we saw this weekend is only the beginning.”

Venture Track Winners (Powered by Cursor)

Students competing in the Cursor Venture Track were evaluated not just on what they built, but on the strength of their problem definition, market insight, and venture readiness.

First Place — StyleSwap

Addresses limited and wasteful wardrobe options by enabling digital closet-sharing and borrowing among friends.

Second Place — UniBud

Supports overwhelmed undergraduates with an AI-powered guide that personalizes milestones and provides advisors real-time insight.

Third Place — ClearMove

Protects renters’ rights by turning leases, checklists, and photos into organized, shareable evidence.

Additional award recipients included:

- **TimeMyGate — Best New Market Creation:** Smart, real-time guidance on when to leave for the airport.
- **BluWorld — Most Unexpected Project:** Social and blockchain incentives to spark real-world adventure.
- **Fairlytics — Most Ready to Go to Market:** Real-time bias monitoring for AI predictions.

- **Ares — Best Insight to Interface:** Predictive AI awareness for air traffic controllers to prevent incidents.
- **BadgerFlix — Most Balanced Project:** Transforming long lectures into short, bingeable learning experiences.

A full list of submissions is available at: <https://badger-build-fest.devpost.com/submissions>

A Campuswide Effort Backed by Industry Partners

Badger Build Fest was made possible through the generous support of campus partners and industry sponsors who contributed funding, facilitated workshops and salons, offered office hours, served as judges, and mentored student teams throughout the weekend. Sponsors included: Cursor, Kinetic Solutions, Strato VC, Cloud Native Madison, Gemini, Turtle.xyz with Solana, UW-Madison CDIS, Wisconsin Institute for Discovery and the Wisconsin School of Business.

A Milestone for UW's Emerging Tech and Venture Ecosystem

Badger Build Fest reflects the Tech Exploration Lab's growing role as a hub for applied innovation, venture discovery, and interdisciplinary collaboration across UW-Madison.

"Students didn't just build — they framed real problems, tested assumptions, and pitched ideas with a clear path to adoption," Bradley said. "That combination of speed and purpose is exactly what today's innovation landscape requires."

Given the strong turnout and overwhelmingly positive feedback, the Tech Exploration Lab plans to make Badger Build Fest an annual signature event.

High-resolution photos from the weekend can be requested from sandra.bradley@wisc.edu.

What's Next

The momentum continues with several upcoming programs:

- **December 3 Student Demo Night** — A concourse-style showcase of student projects from across the Tech Exploration Lab.
- **Digital Health Challenge (Spring 2026)** — A semester-long initiative focused on brain health and digital innovation.

Organizations interested in sponsoring, mentoring, or partnering on future events are encouraged to contact the Tech Exploration Lab.

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