Successful Industry-Academia Partnership

Case Studies

The Importance of a Scientific Champion

Dr. Eric Agdeppa, Executive Director, Innovation and General Manager, Hill-Rom

One of Carnegie Mellon’s successful tech transfer stories is related to a professor who was enthusiastic to out-license a university technology and passionate to see it commercialized by industry. A key component to this success story was the university’s decision to take a business-friendly approach to its licensing deals, including from an economic perspective, instead of an overly aggressive approach.

Another example of a successful university technology transfer arrangement involved an artificial intelligence technology coming out of a Canadian university, which assigned full rights in the technology to the company for a nominal fee. In Dr. Agdeppa’s opinion, assignment is a valuable option to intellectual property transfer out of a university, when possible. Full ownership of the technology was granted to the acquiring company, allowing for further development, unfettered by ongoing obligations to the university.

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Jamie Kemler, VP, Intellectual Property Business Strategy, Stryker

The University of Colorado (CU) Denver and Stryker collaborated on a successful acquisition due in large part to the relationship and interaction with the Bioengineering Chair and engineer at CU and the inventing orthopedic surgeon responsible for the research activities. The relationship between the bioengineering department and its location on the medical campus also contributed to the synergy between all members. According to Mr. Kemler, “Typically, successful deals are a result of relationships already established through clinicians.” Additionally, another contributor to the outcome was a result of the biomedical engineers having partners who were able to “quickly understand the clinical need, assemble a business-savvy technical team and iterate through multiple prototypes efficiently.” The overall outcome was a result of the bioengineering members being proactive and acting as facilitators - not so much as drivers of the agreement.
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Fundraising Support
M. Jason Brooke, Co-Founder & General Counsel, Vasoptic Medical Inc.

Johns Hopkins University has created pitch books to support their students and faculty seeking to commercialize their technologies. The pitch books include detailed information regarding the companies that have licensed technologies generated by the university. Johns Hopkins prioritizes attending industry gatherings, such as the J.P. Morgan Healthcare Conference, to conduct meetings and share these materials with potential investors. The university also hosts its own “investor days” to provide an avenue for investors to find these technologies. This engagement has been invaluable to startup companies, including Vasoptic Medical, Inc.

Vasoptic has maintained a positive relationship with the lab associated with Johns Hopkins, which has proven to be instrumental as the company continues to develop its products and seek grant funding to support further development activities. This type of relationship with the university, which may be facilitated through its technology transfer office, is invaluable to a startup. University technology transfer offices recognizing the value that startups provide in terms of further development of university technology can also support the companies by providing licenses with reasonable financial terms. This in turn will support the company’s financing prospects and long-term success.