Innovation Teams
THE CHALLENGE

In 2008, Boise State University intellectual property lay dormant. University research faculty generated innovative results from research, yet patent-pending intellectual property was largely forgotten and underexposed to the marketplace, due to a lack of internal resources and management. In an effort initiated by the Vice President of Research and Economic Development amid an economic downturn and university budget constraints, the university established the Office of Technology Transfer in 2009.

THE STRATEGY

The new office launched the “Idaho Research and Economic Development and Entrepreneurship Initiative” with a grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Small Business Administration. The objective was to strengthen the overall Idaho economy and region by maximizing the economic impact of university-based research and innovation. Its two strategies were designed to leverage resources and engage students, faculty and the broader university community in technology transfer.

The first strategy increased the impact of university-based intellectual property in the commercial marketplace through enhanced technology preparation and development. Interdisciplinary graduate student teams, called Innovation Teams, prepared market assessments and commercialization plans that were critical to the operations of the newly formed, one-person Office of Technology Transfer. The plans were presented to faculty inventors, community partners and industry advisory teams to generate feedback and leads critical in the search for actionable commercialization.

The second strategy selected a faculty member to devote time and effort to gain the information and skills to become a permanent internal peer resource on technology transfer and entrepreneurial matters. The Technology Transfer Fellow participated in all Office of Technology Transfer activities, including the Innovation Teams, patentability consultations with attorneys and license negotiations. The Fellow also led the “harvesting” program to identify research-active faculty and encourage invention disclosure and engagement.

THE WIN

Since 2009, the Office of Technology Transfer has tripled invention disclosures, generated new licensing revenue and met an important first milestone with the launch of the first Boise State University spin-out company in December 2012: GoGoLabs. Over twenty graduate students gained Innovation Team experiences and generated skills now deployed in local and national workforces. Faculty perspectives and the university culture overall have migrated towards an appreciation of
intellectual property commercialization as a valued research outcome. Community and industry partnerships have grown and have led to jointly-developed intellectual property and research projects. Today, the Office of Technology Transfer is fully operational and contributing to the Idaho economy and beyond.