The University of Cincinnati Research Institute

Promoting Use of UC’s Intellectual Property
THE PROJECT

A key aspect of the University of Cincinnati’s (UC) ability to impact the community economic growth and development is having an effective interface for faculty and student interactions with its business and community partners. To address this need, UC created the University of Cincinnati Research Institute (UCRI). UCRI is an independent, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) which serves three primary needs of UC and the community: First is to serve industrial clients who require the services of internationally recognized faculty experts at UC in a timely and efficient manner and provide access to highly specialized facilities and equipment that industry would otherwise have to develop or purchase themselves. This functionality is important in attracting local, national and international industries to partner with UC in performing sponsored research. Second is to provide an efficient mechanism for faculty and students from all colleges to commercialize technology and non-technology-based intellectual property, including specialized consulting services and training programs. Valuable commercialization opportunities are typically missed by not including all types of intellectual property unique to a university. Third is to provide UC students with experiential learning experiences with industry partners, and to learn about commercialization and future opportunities for commercializing their ideas.

A SOLUTION FOR AN ENTIRE UNIVERSITY

While the use of a 501(c)(3) by a university is not unique with respect to industry sponsored research efforts by faculty and students, most such institutes focus heavily, if not exclusively, on the commercialization of technology. By its very nature, this approach excludes the participation by those faculty not engaged in new technology development. To fully capitalize and leverage the potential of the university, we must recognize that a significant amount of intellectual property (IP) in any university cannot be held or touched! By definition, such a narrow view of commercialization and IP ignores the rich opportunities of commercialization in areas such as liberal arts, fine arts, education, criminal justice, design, planning and law. Key to the opening of UCRI was to develop opportunities for all of our colleges at UC.
A NEW WAY OF DOING BUSINESS

UCRI was designed to “move at the speed of business” in addressing these needs. The compelling need to establish UCRI comes from the desire of local (and other) industrial leaders such as General Electric Aviation (GEA) and Proctor & Gamble to have a research partner that can expedite and advance their research needs to build on their economic growth as an industry. In addition, UCRI provides the proper environment to promote commercialization of IP throughout the university. As such, UCRI has an opportunity to significantly grow our industrial research funding base and provide synergisms that will undoubtedly reach into the classroom. Establishing such industry partnerships is an essential element for overall growth of our research base which will provide future opportunities for innovation at UC.

THE IMPACT

UCRI was approved for business on May 22, 2012 by the UC Board of Trustees. Within the first year of operation, new business accounting of $1,600,000 was created through industry partnerships or commercialization from the Colleges of Engineering and Applied Science (CEAS); Education, Criminal Justice and Human Services (CECH); and the College of Medicine. Promoting regional industry growth, UCRI has developed a partnership with General Electric Aviation (GEA) to help develop the next generation of jet engines. Currently, UCRI has contractual commitments from GEA for $2,000,000 annually over the next three years. In support of this partnership, GEA/UCRI was recently awarded an Ohio Third Frontier Research and Development Center Attraction Program award of $5,000,000 as a collaborative effort between GEA and CEAS. The technical areas covered under this award will allow UCRI to support GEA in their efforts to remain an international leader in aviation jet engine development. The state of Ohio is currently a strong player in the global aviation jet engine market, and UCRI will allow us to better contribute to this success through its competitive research programs.

UCRI serves to develop commercial centers in all of its colleges. As a second example of non-technology commercialization within UCRI, the CECH opened a Criminal Justice Center through which faculty provides technical and training services to local, regional and national law enforcement, prisons, cities and states. This Center currently generates over $1,500,000 annually in contractual revenue. A third example of the broad range of activities incorporated within UCRI was the creation of a unique consulting firm as a brand within UCRI involving all of the faculty from CEAS called UC Engineers™. The first goal of UC Engineers™ is to greatly enhance and promote the research base within CEAS, and to enhance and expand the availability of expertise in CEAS to industry to address their need for immediate problem solving and assistance in troubleshooting daily problems encountered within industry. UC Engineers™ projects will be of short-term duration (less than 4 months) and consist primarily of consultation and/or access to facilities and equipment for testing. For longer term projects, the standard CEAS operational plan for industry sponsored research in UCRI will apply. To date, all faculty within CEAS have agreed to participate and have signed contractual agreements with UCRI to participate.
LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

While UCRI will enhance commercialization opportunities for university intellectual property, the real value of UCRI is to enhance industry partnerships as a means of expanding our research opportunities throughout the university system. Commercialization of intellectual property is best served through a vigorous and sizable research base. That base must not only be maintained, it must grow by expanding both federal funding and industry research partnerships. The new partnership between GEA/CEAS within UCRI is a prime example of how such a partnership can expand our research portfolio long before eventual commercialization might be realized.

Link for up-to-date UCRI News: http://www.uc.edu/ucresearch/officeofresearch/ucri.html

Tags: Commercialization, University, Business, IP

Sub-category: A university investment or commitment that has implications for the economy