EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Community research

Knowledge Transfer – towards a common vision?

European Commission

Research DG

Frank Moeschler, PhD, MInstKT

Changing roles

1. Large industry is moving to “Open Innovation”
2. The rise of the entrepreneurial university
3. Most policy makers are looking at increasing the impact of public funding

⇒ Collaborative research and strategic alliances are becoming more common!

A definition…

- Knowledge Transfer involves the processes for capturing, collecting and sharing explicit and tacit knowledge, including skills and competence. It includes both commercial and non-commercial activities such as research collaborations, consultancy, licensing, spin-off creation, researcher mobility, publication, etc.

- While the emphasis is on scientific and technological knowledge other forms such as technology-enabled business processes are also concerned.

The main barriers

- 97 % of practioners think that insufficient attention is paid to Knowledge Transfer!!!
- Universities and private firms have different agendas and expertise (75%)

Industry generally wants quick fixes to specific problems rather than long term scientific research"

British academic

...Universities should in an early stage approach industry and discuss the best way of valorising their R&D results... Depending on the case, this may even imply that patenting of a University's R&D results is best left to a company participating to the funding of the research - of course against a fair compensation to the university - an industrial association

The main barriers

- Universities find it difficult to balance their researchers' desire for open access to research results with the need to protect them.
- Collaboration across countries is additionally hampered by three main factors:
  - cultural differences;
  - legal differences; and,
  - difficulties in finding partners.

European Commission Communication & Guidelines

- The Commission adopted on April 4, 2007 :
  - A Communication offering policy orientations to Member States (COM(2007)182) :

    Improving knowledge transfer between research institutions and industry across Europe : embracing open innovation

  - Accompanied by a Commission Staff Working Document containing operational guidelines for universities and other PROs (SEC(2007)449)

Fundamental principles for policymakers

- Exploitation of research results is good for all.
- BUT, the primary driver should NOT be a belief that significant funding can be generated by individual institutions either to add to their wealth or to reduce the need for future public funding...

The “not made here” syndrome

“*I know that alignment of interests exists in the UK but in Greece this is not the case at all. There is very little industry and no cooperation between scientists at universities and industry or business partners*”

Greek academic

Some key issues to be addressed (1/2)

Framework conditions

- To perform knowledge sharing activities effectively, universities need to have sufficient autonomy to recruit experienced staff on a competitive basis.
- Where appropriate, governments should actively promote and support the pooling of resources (including patents!!!).
- Academic appraisal criteria should take other activities such as patenting, licensing, mobility and collaboration with industry into account.

Some key issues to be addressed (2/2)

Awareness Raising!

- University senior management needs to recognize the importance of collaboration with industry and endorse it.
- Researchers need to understand the value of collaborating with industry!
- Realistic expectations regarding the value of IPR are needed by BOTH parties – universities often overvalue their research and industry expect things for less than the “market price”.
- Promote long-term sustainable relationships rather than over-emphasizing the value of quick win!

International cooperation – some additional concerns

- How does funding affect IPR-ownership? Eg Bayh-Dole act means that US government has march-in rights...
- Are there any other legal differences that will impact on the ownership? Eg Chinese patent law has restrictions regarding "made in China" inventions...
- Are there any particular rules or requirements regarding publication or confidentiality? Eg Sweden requires open access to data held by universities...
- Are there any fiscal measures that impact on funding or ownership of IPRs? Eg UK SMEs need to own the IPR to get a tax break...

Next steps?

- Public consultation on the mechanisms to promote knowledge transfer we should be adopting in Europe (ends 31 August 2007)

http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/questionnaire_en.html

- Creation of a Charter for IPR management by universities (early 2008)

We all have similar problems regarding university – industry links.

No magic solution exists so far, what needs to be created is more...

Trust!

Thank you !

For more information :

http://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/policy/ipr_en.htm#3