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A Bridge for Brainpower

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A Bridge *for* Brainpower

Kansas State University Institute for Commercialization brings technologies to industry, benefiting economies



Sometimes even brainpower needs a little extra intellectual brawn in a crowded marketplace. That's where the Kansas State University Institute for Commercialization excels.

The Institute for Commercialization is a nonprofit technology transfer initiative of Kansas State University, the city of Manhattan, Kan., and the Manhattan Area Chamber of Commerce. It licenses technologies from Kansas State University and other state universities and centers of excellence, bridging the research and intellectual property to industry. In return, the local and regional economies benefit from monetizing the technologies.

"The big question for tech transfer operations is really how do you take a major American university where you have a lot of really smart and skilled people, and then leverage the intellectual property and the intellectual capability that resides at the institution into monetary gain for that institution and the community," said Kent Glasscock, president of the Institute for Commercialization.

But for Glasscock and his team of seven, it's a question they've already answered.

Since 1994, the Kansas State University Institute for Commercialization has created more than 170 jobs in the region, which average \$57,000 annually. In the past 11 years the Institute has also generated nearly \$165 million in new revenue into the economy of Manhattan, and each month brings nearly \$1 million in revenue back to the area.

Monetizing Kansas State University's research has also generated approximately \$12 million in revenue back to the university during the past 10 years. Most recently the Institute is licensing the university's technology for a plentiful and noncontroversial source of stem cells, as well as for feed encapsulation technology used in food animal production.

Institute staff members also specialize in marketing faculty expertise to industry in order to create partnerships that generate new technologies. This includes developing several national consortiums from the brainpower of Kansas State University faculty in cybersecurity and veterinary medicine, said Rebecca Spexarth, the Institute's director of economic development.

"Once we start on that first project, companies often become interested in working with Kansas State University or another of our partners for additional projects because now we have a relationship with them and they realize the quality knowledge and resources they're getting," Spexarth said.

In addition to Kansas State University technologies, the Institute also licenses more than 1,000 patents donated through the national Technology Acquisition, Development and Commercialization program, which generate more than \$45 million annually.

From its technologies the Institute for Commercialization has also created nearly 25 startup companies. NutriJoy Inc., which produced a non-refrigerated fruit and dairy drink, was acquired by the Coca-Cola Co. in 2008. ScavengeTech LLC, a Manhattan-based company that designs technology that monitors the system health of the legacy engines on the natural gas pipelines across the nation, was a spinoff of technology developed by a former professor of mechanical and nuclear engineering.

But the Institute for Commercialization benefits more than just the economy of Manhattan. Partnerships are also bringing revenue into other communities, said Lindsay Biggs, director of marketing for the Institute. These partnerships include those with MRI Global — a scientific/engineering organization with headquarters in Kansas City, Mo., that performs research and technical services for government, industry and academia — and Wichita State University in Wichita, Kan.

"At Wichita State University they have a lot of great technology but weren't extracting the maximum amount of value from it," Biggs said. "In working with us, they began to reap additional rewards related to their patents."

Glasscock said much of the Institute's success stems from not only his staff members' talent, but also from the close ties between the university and city.

"The relationship between Kansas State University and the city of Manhattan is one of the handful of very outstanding relationships in the country between a major American university and its host community," Glasscock said. "The community's economic development strategy and the university's vision of becoming a top 50 public research university by 2025 are perfectly in sync. I don't know if there's another university and community in the country where the vision of the institution is an absolute match for the economic development strategy for the host community. That's pretty remarkable."

By Greg Tammen, Communications and Marketing



Rebecca Spexarth, Kent Glasscock, and Lindsay Biggs