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MEASURING IMPACT: LESSIONS FROM THE TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER IN THE ACADEMIC SECTOR

Abstract

Measuring social impact is the responsible thing to do when you spend taxpayer money. The Association of University Technology Managers (AUTM) has, over the last 20 years, been tracking expenditures and outcomes at U.S. and Canadian institutions. AUTM data include research expenditures, patent filings and expenditures, licensing activities, and startup creation. AUTM also conducts examines outcomes in its annual Better World Report, which contains case studies on technology transfers that have changed the way we live. (AUTM is professional society of over 3,000 technology transfer professionals from universities, research hospitals, and similar institutions from around the world. The bulk of our membership is in North America.)

In this paper, using insights garnered as a VP and Board Member of AUTM and as a NASA Goddard SFC contractor, I will examine at best practices and take-aways for space laboraties and glight center from the 20 year history with AUTM metrics. We will look at how these metrics are related to the evolving US paradigm concerning the performance and purpose of government-funded research and its industrial use and the need to keep government support alive.

Gobalization of innovation and global economic recession has disrupted the traditional paradigm. Not surprisingly there is a debate raging over metrics again, and terms like jobs and return-on-investment are on the lips of politicians and university upper management. The significance of this debate for space RD and technology institutions is explored. We conclude, with my own views on what should measured to provide an honest picture of the impacts of space technology on society while attracting international support and funding for space technology development and commercialization.