

High costs of research at universities made worse by funding gap

January 9 2014

Although more opportunity exists for university-based researchers to be innovative, and there is more financial support for innovation than ever before, the cost of university research is rising to new levels and presents a serious funding problem. The "real costs" of research—costs that include indirect costs—often extend far beyond support from a university's central research office and are almost never covered by funding. As a result, the aggressive research agendas set by universities have costs that often outweigh the ultimate revenue universities hope to gain from research.

The paper appears in the current special issue of [*Technology and Innovation- Proceedings of the National Academy of Inventors*](#).

"There is a significant gap between the real costs of university research and the funding that is available to support university research," said Karen Holbrook, former president of The Ohio State University.

"Greater administrative financial support is needed for investigators and new, external funding sources need to be explored to pay for indirect costs, such as staff, equipment, educational resources, and travel."

University-based research is vitally important to the communities served by universities, said the authors, and needs to continue at high levels.

According to co-author Dr. Paul R. Sanberg, distinguished university professor and senior vice president for research and innovation at the University of South Florida (USF), externally-funded research dollars

are of great value to the community when the "imported money" translates into more highly skilled, high-wage jobs, the sales of goods and services and expertise that can be accessed by the community.

"University-based medical research is a case in point," said Sanberg. "This research saves and extends lives, and the universities conducting this kind of research are often key to companies relocating to the area."

However, aggressive research agendas need adequate financial support, and Holbrook and Sanberg want to see university central research offices do better when it comes to a number of fundraising-related functions, such as resource acquisition and management, marketing the university, building external relationships, institutional investment, and institutional accountability, performance, and productivity.

The authors also list external revenue sources that can be tapped to support university-based research, including state, federal, and private sources; special state support (such as tobacco settlement or oil spill-related dollars); equity ownership in startup; and small companies housed at university business incubators.

Holbrook and Sanberg also call for a university's central research office to be more aware of current issues in higher education; account better for time, money, and activities related to research; place greater emphasis on entrepreneurship; and be more proactive at developing strategic partnerships within the academy as well as locally and globally.

"A university's challenge is to reduce costs where there are unnecessary duplicate activities, to generate more revenue to support research, and to expand services to support faculty research," concluded the authors.

Provided by University of South Florida

Citation: High costs of research at universities made worse by funding gap (2014, January 9)
retrieved 27 April 2024 from
<https://phys.org/news/2014-01-high-universities-worse-funding-gap.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.