

Lab-to-market study explores success

18 April 2019, by Greta Guest



Credit: University of Michigan

Universities and federal laboratories are the cornerstones of American innovation, developing new products that address important societal issues and drive economic growth.

The University of Michigan, with support from the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Institute of Standards and Technology, studied public research universities across North America to identify best practices for bringing new products to market. The findings aim to improve national competitiveness by providing universities with a practical roadmap on how to translate research from the lab to the marketplace.

"Universities face increased demands for translating research to innovations that can serve the public good," said Paula Sorrell, director of the U-M Economic Growth Institute, which led the study. "By identifying best practices, researchers created a foundation that can guide universities

and labs, as well as policymakers, on how to increase the impact of the nation's [research institutions](#)."

U-M researchers interviewed and surveyed representatives at 59 Innovation and Economic Prosperity Universities, as designated by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, and together they identified the following best practices for [technology](#) commercialization:

- A university with a strong cultural emphasis on innovation has leadership that promotes its value both internally to the university and its faculty, as well as externally to the surrounding community.
- Strong technology ecosystems are dependent upon champions—experienced professionals with industry and commercialization backgrounds—assisting in the maturation of a technology through expert guidance and mentorship.
- Research career incentives are vital to motivate and reward new ideas, while resources provide the necessary environment for continued growth.
- Cross-organization collaborations are necessary throughout the process to foster ideas and improve outcomes.

U-M researchers and APLU representatives plan to share these best practices with universities and federal laboratories across the country in an effort to address prevailing gaps in the commercialization process, mentorship and culture.

LAB-TO-MARKET BEST PRACTICES AT INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY UNIVERSITIES

 <p>CULTURE Value technology innovation and lab-to-market activities at all levels through cultural norms.</p>	1
 <p>CHAMPIONS Supporting lab-to-market innovation at all levels through champions and organizational programming</p>	2
 <p>INCENTIVES Incentives and resources are vital to support technology commercialization</p>	3
 <p>COLLABORATION Focusing on partnerships to foster, speed and enhance lab-to-market activities</p>	4

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"This study is an important contribution to a larger NIST initiative to increase the returns from the \$150 billion federal investment in research and development," said NIST Director Walter Copan, who also serves as Under Secretary of Commerce for Standards and Technology. "We're grateful to the University of Michigan for the insights they have provided through this significant study with APLU of innovation [best practices](#)."

NIST has a coordinating role in federal technology transfer, leading the Interagency Working Group for Technology Transfer, serving as the Host Agency for the Federal Laboratory Consortium for Technology Transfer, and performing governmentwide analysis of efforts to move the results of federally funded research and development from lab to market.

In addition to increasing national competitiveness and accelerating research commercialization, the findings also can help promote the importance of research funding from government, industry and other partners.

"Public research universities work hard to ensure that discoveries made in their labs can be translated into technologies that save lives, strengthen our national security and improve our quality of life," said Sheila Martin, APLU vice president for economic development and community engagement.

"The institutions designated as IEP universities serve as outstanding models for how other schools can ensure their lab activities translate into technologies that benefit the United States and society overall. We are grateful that the University of Michigan conducted this study to help identify and elevate these successful practices."

APLU's IEP universities designation program helps higher education institutions codify, elevate and advance their enterprise supporting economic and community development, while providing national recognition to institutions committed to university economic development. In order to earn the designation, institutions complete a rigorous self-study and stakeholder engagement process. They identify their economic development strengths, and areas of growth and improvement.

More information: Study summary: Maximizing Innovation and Technology Commercialization of Federal Research Investments: economicgrowth.umich.edu/lab-to-market/

Provided by University of Michigan

APA citation: Lab-to-market study explores success (2019, April 18) retrieved 19 June 2019 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-04-lab-to-market-explores-success.html>

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