

UM's Tech Transfer Notes
January 2012
Sunburst Success & University Council Recap

Dear Colleague –

With 2012 well underway, I hope the new year is treating you well thus far!

As a highlight to begin the year, I'd like to congratulate Dr. Mike DeGrandpre and his start-up company Sunburst Sensors for winning a \$2.5 million contract to supply instrumentation to the Ocean Observatories Initiative. More than 100 of Sunburst's oceanic instruments will be manufactured in Missoula under the contract, with University of Montana research serving as the original stimulus for these innovative products. You can read more about Sunburst and the award at:

<http://www.oceanobservatories.org/2012/sunburst-sensors-selected-to-provide-instruments-for-ooi-water-measurements/>

With this note I'll also recap the major points covered at the January 24, 2012 University Council meeting, which focused on technology transfer and the Montana Technology Enterprise Center. With regard to the technology transfer, the discussion centered around five points of impact when considering the \$65 to \$70 million in research being conducted at The University of Montana each year:

- **Jobs** – more than 60% of research dollars spent at the University go toward a person's salary – technicians, research faculty, administrative support... These dollars are a direct economic contributor to our community and our state.
- **Student Opportunities** – many graduate student assistantships are funded under research grants. Several hundred of these hands-on learning experiences are funded each year at the University, and help shape the next generation of teachers, scientists and entrepreneurs.
- **Intellectual Property** – basic level research facilitates the exploration of the fundamentals of disease, environmental issues, learning patterns in children..., resulting in new knowledge. In addition to public dissemination of this newfound information, the knowledge can also take the form of new patents or copyrights.
- **Companies** – early stage research discoveries often lay the groundwork for new industries and companies, many of which chose to establish their base in the university community from which they were derived. A Missoula example is Rivertop Renewables, which is featured in the new Montanan – <http://www.umt.edu/montanan/w12/Team%20Chemistry.asp>
- **Products** – a primary motivation behind the 1980 Bayh-Dole Act (technology transfer legislation) was to stimulate the conversion of federally funded research discoveries into life-changing and life-saving products, such as the Sunburst Sensors' instrumentation highlighted above.

With regard to the Montana Technology Enterprise Center (a Missoula based business incubator), both a construction and management update were presented at the council meeting:

Construction – The Montana Technology Enterprise Center’s physical transition began in early January as renovation started on the eastern 15,000 square feet of the facility, with construction of a new pilot plant facility slated to take place later this year. Dick Anderson Construction (of Montana) is serving as the general contractor on the project and anticipates a completion date in mid to late summer 2012. Once completed, the renovated space will be occupied by UM spin out Rivertop Renewables under a long term lease.

Management – As of late Fall 2011 The University of Montana became the managing agent of the Montana Technology Enterprise Center. This new relationship presents an opportunity for improved collaboration between the University and tenant companies to stimulate opportunities for student interns, company growth, and job creation. Additionally, University leadership is working closely with the newly formed Missoula Economic Partnership to improve coordination of entrepreneurship resources for all Missoula based companies, including those located at the Montana Technology Enterprise Center and those affiliated with The University of Montana.

If you have any questions or suggestions on these or other topics, please send me a return email or feel free to give me a call at 243.2148.

Best regards,
Joe

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