

UM's Tech Transfer Notes

November 2009

Personal Introduction and The Economic Development Role of Universities

Dear Colleague,

Greetings from the University of Montana's Office of Technology Transfer! My name is Joe Fanguy, and I'm writing to you while closing out my first month as the university's new director of tech transfer. The majority of my time thus far at UM has been spent visiting with many of you - administrators, faculty, research staff, students, as well as some outside partners of the technology transfer office, including patent attorneys, representatives of the investment community, and some economic developers. Through each of these visits I've learned a lot about the potential for technology transfer here at the University of Montana, and with that feedback I've identified some initial steps to help take this important aspect of the university to the next level.

The first step involves raising the campus' awareness of existing and potential technology transfer activities associated with the university's research programs. With this in mind, I'm initiating a bimonthly communication in hopes of stimulating conversation about UM's efforts to broaden the public impact of its research enterprise through technology transfer. These communications will be called UM's Tech Transfer Notes, and I'll use them to keep you informed of important technology transfer topics as well as opportunities for you to get involved. With my first note, I want to take a moment to introduce myself, as well as the general topic of technology transfer.

My family and I have come to Missoula from Starkville, Mississippi, where prior to our departure I served as Assistant Director in Mississippi State University's Office of Technology Commercialization. Before speaking to those responsibilities, I'd like to tell you a little about my education and professional background. I was raised in South Louisiana, and in 1999 moved to Starkville in pursuit of graduate studies in the field of chemistry. Through great mentoring, I was able to complete a Master's degree in analytical chemistry and a Ph.D. in biophysical chemistry, during which time I also worked as an applied research scientist in the university's College of Engineering. Collectively these experiences exposed me to the various activities associated with technology transfer, such as submitting an invention disclosure as a graduate student, filing a patent application as a university employee, and serving as an industrial liaison on efforts to commercialize university intellectual property.

The tipping point for me to pursue technology transfer as a career came in 2004, when I served as both the technical and business representative on a commercialization effort involving environmental sensors. It was this opportunity that gave me first-hand experience connecting the science and business related dots required for technology transfer. Shortly thereafter I joined Mississippi State's commercialization office as a licensing associate, and was promoted

to assistant director after a few years of managing the university's life science and engineering patent portfolio. As assistant director I became very involved with the university's start-up companies and entrepreneurship activities while managing a seventeen county *innovation-led economic development* effort that focused on connecting technology, entrepreneurship, and investment capital. Having gone through each of these experiences during the past ten years, I am now thrilled to be here at The University of Montana, where I believe there is a wonderful opportunity for us to work together to build a first-rate technology transfer program.

In closing this first UM Tech Transfer Note, I'd like to briefly introduce the topic of technology transfer by encouraging you to read an attached article entitled "Should Universities Be Agents of Economic Development?" This particular article is part of a collection of scholarly papers presented at the 2008 Kauffman-Planck Summit on Entrepreneurship Research and Policy. In summary, the mentioned paper touches on some of the issues surrounding university technology transfer programs in the 21st century. As you find time to read the article, I'd like to hear your thoughts. So please feel free to contact me via email at joe.fanguy@umontana.edu or by phone at 406-243-2148.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Joe

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