

RESEARCHERS' GUIDE TO TECHNOLOGY COMMERCIALIZATION AT MASON

Overview

Technology commercialization begins with you, the researchers and inventors, and your submission of an Invention Disclosure to Mason's Office of Technology Transfer. OTT works collaboratively with the George Mason Research Foundation to commercialize inventions by Mason faculty and their collaborators. Your point of contact is always OTT staff; it is their job to determine whether OTT or GMRF should take it from there.

As an inventor, your role doesn't end with the Invention Disclosure. It continues throughout the entire commercialization process, as described below. Successful commercialization means income for inventors and Mason – inventors are entitled to half the net revenue derived from their inventions.

Invention Disclosure Form

OTT is in the process of revising the Invention Disclosure form bit by bit, so always download a new form from the link; don't re-use an old one. The Invention Disclosure form is here: <http://research.gmu.edu/techtransfer/index.html>. Researchers should, at a minimum, consider whether to file an Invention Disclosure anytime they close a grant and before they publish or present their work.

Mason asserts ownership of faculty inventions in accordance with state law, your employment contract, and University Policies 4002 and 4003. The University Policies will be the most helpful in determining whether you need to file an Invention Disclosure. When in doubt, contact OTT.

Evaluation

The Invention Disclosure is evaluated to determine its commercial potential; not every invention will take the next step toward commercialization. The three primary considerations are patentability, the market, and the nature of the technology.

Patentability is about whether a patent with significant commercial value can be obtained, considering a variety of factors including the breadth of the claims and the ability to identify infringers. In some cases, another key factor will be whether an alternate means of protection – such as copyright or trade secret -- is more appropriate.

The market inquiry looks at many factors, including existing solutions to the problem solved by the invention, how much the invention improves on those solutions (when quality and cost measures are considered), the size of the market, and the existing competitors.

The technology part of the evaluation considers various aspects of the technology, including its state of development, the time and costs to bring it to market, and regulatory requirements (e.g., FDA approval).

These evaluations are led by OTT staff, who frequently consult with other Mason community members and with third parties to gain other perspectives and expertise. Inventor participation is critical to the accurate assessment of an invention.

Inventions that move on to the next stage of the commercialization process are re-evaluated for commercial potential several times during the process, and inventions can be pulled from the process for lack of sufficient commercial potential at any point.

Intellectual Property Protection

Almost all inventions that will be commercialized will receive copyright or patent protection. If you think you have an invention that should be patented, filing your invention disclosure with OTT *before* making a public disclosure will help protect its patentability. The patent process is usually long and includes two or more back-and-forths with the Patent and Trademark Office. Inventor help is critical in this process.

Marketing

With the inventor's collaboration, a non-confidential marketing summary will be developed and then sent to potential licensees; in some cases, the description may also be posted on appropriate websites. Potential licensees are identified by the inventor, by OTT and GMRF's network of contacts, and research.

Licensing

Some inventions are suitable for licensing by existing firms; others are suitable for start-up companies that are built around the invention. Mason-developed IP has been licensed to both kinds of companies.

Revenue Sharing

Half of the net revenue from a licensed invention is distributed to the inventors.

Some Helpful Links

<http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/copyright-in-university-works/> (copyright in university works)

<http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/patenting-university-inventions/>

Contact OTT

Main number: 703-993-8933

Website: <http://research.gmu.edu/techtransfer/index.html>