

RSOG SEMINAR

Effective Technology Transfer-Experience from the UK

with

Professor Trevor McMillan

When : 5 September 2016
Where : Razak School of Government
Speakers : Professor Trevor McMillan

About the Seminar

As observed in the past, technology transfer focused solely on host nation obtaining licensing, thus making them costly and without the necessary human capital element embedded to it. It has since then evolved and many nations saw the importance of ensuring transfer of technology is efficient, effective, sustainable, and more importantly, synergises all relevant stakeholders. Taking into account the level of research investment or the broader technology transfer eco system, the United Kingdom has demonstrated tremendous success in the field of technology transfer with other countries. In this seminar, Professor Trevor McMillan will discuss United Kingdom's past experience with technology transfer and the Higher Education Funding Council for England's task of developing a Knowledge Exchange Framework as a means of enabling education and research in universities that would be impactful to society and economy. Issues surrounding technology transfer from the perspective of a sector-based working group will also be explored, among others.

Summary

As we embrace the advancement of technology and rely more on it for our daily life, the benefits has been reaped by many people be it industry players or non-industry players alike. Professor Trevor through his discourse, spoke about effective technology transfer from the perspective of the United Kingdom and the impact on the economy and job creation. Technology transfer is one of many ways of adopting technology to improve the quality of life of the people and develop the local economy. Most importantly, it has the potential to support enterprise and business and contribute significantly towards research and innovation, human capital development and enhancing social equality. He added that it is one of the ways for a university to play a role for the benefit of regional/national development. He illustrated the economic impact of the universities on export earnings, contribution to UK GDP and direct and indirect jobs. In the case of Keele University, the significant role of technology has contributed towards accelerating the innovation ecosystem. Some of these examples are network and cluster development, science parks, knowledge transfer partnerships, IP co-development and collaborative research centres.

He mentioned that one of the mechanisms used to enhance the growth of science and innovation is by assessing higher education performance in knowledge exchange activities in order to identify examples of good practices. Interestingly, universities embark on technology transfer to boost economic and social benefits, enhance relationships with industry and business, increase quality of research and teaching and as a means to cover costs and increase revenue. He added that the key players in Intellectual Property commercialization is the academics, university leadership, university council/board, funders/financers, the government and technology transfer officers.

In conclusion, he stressed the importance of the university leadership to support the initiatives undertaken by the research centres and the collaboration with businesses for technology transfer to be successful.

Key Issues Raised

- Technology is typically transferred through a licence agreement in which the university retains ownership of the intellectual property while the industrial partner obtains conditional rights to use and develop a technology.
- Technology transfer is vital to encourage science and innovation to flourish in an industry. New ideas need to be developed to advance the knowledge of a particular field.
- Technology transfer is important for the advancement of the economy because it creates the opportunity for collaboration with industrial partners.
- A scheme to support entrepreneurs should be created to encourage and develop innovation and business in the field of science and technology.
- Most ideas on technological transfer comes from the students of the university itself. Hence, it is important for the University leadership to provide support, encouragement and commitment towards realizing the technology transfer initiative.

- It is important for a leader to have clarity and clear direction on what needs to be done to ensure that technology transfer is done in a holistic and integrated manner that benefits the stakeholders.
- In most cases, protecting intellectual property rights cost more than to obtain the license itself. Apart from the millions of pounds spent on the research grant, the costs involved in technological transfer is quite a large sum.
- One of the important issues that often arises is regarding the effectiveness of the mechanism to evaluate if a transfer of a particular technology is a good investment or a bad one. Many factors should be taken into consideration such as the number of citations recorded, the credibility of the institution, the impact of the research and the potential return of investment.
- The Brexit will have an impact on technology transfer because of the limited access to human talent in the industry and a wider market to participate in the exchange of technology.

About the Speaker

Professor Trevor McMillan became Vice-Chancellor of Keele University in August 2015. Before moving to Keele as Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost in January 2014, he was Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research at Lancaster University, where he led several major academic developments and was the lead for many partnerships with other Universities and external organisations in the UK and abroad. He was also awarded a PhD in Biophysics at the Institute of Cancer Research, University of London in 1984. As a radiation biologist, his research examined the role of DNA damage and repair in the efficacy of radiotherapy and the harmful cellular effects of UVA following environmentally relevant exposures. He is also a Fellow of the Royal Society of Biology.

Contact

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