

Lambert Review of Business-University Collaboration

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Dear Sir

One of the biggest problems associated with fostering Business-University collaboration is convincing industry that there is value in the collaboration. From an industry perspective there appears to be a lot activity being encouraged in areas such as: research, innovation, skills and competency, and knowledge and technology transfer. What industry does not see is any 'joined up thinking' from Government to make these things happen.

As the Director of a Faraday Partnership I also find it difficult to convince industry (sometimes) that what we offer is different to what some of the other Government-sponsored activities offer (for example, the RDAs, the SSCs). What makes the situation more difficult is there is no 'culture for collaboration' between the initiatives. The Government departments involved in establishing these initiatives should have to work much harder at ensuring that they look like they are part of the same Government policy.

I believe we (i.e. IMPACT) have been very successful in 'brokering relationships' between industry and academia. We have ~40 research projects within IMPACT, all of which have industrial contribution and INVOLVEMENT. Nineteen of these projects are in one programme on Nanotechnology which involves 7 universities and 15 companies. We have been in receipt of ~£3.7m of government money for research, and have been able to lever ~£3.0m from industry to contribute into this research. Furthermore, we have worked with industry over the last 18 months to develop a distance-learning programme in colloid **technology** which is at graduate/postgraduate level. I do not believe that this could have been 'delivered' by an academic institution. Furthermore, it is my perception that the Sector Skills Councils have been set up to deliver training/learning at a lower level – although I may be wrong!

There are many issues that I would like to see debated during this review, and would like to highlight some of them here:

1. Intellectual property rights – why is there no standardisation across universities for rewarding academics? Why do academic institutions want industry to pay for research AND still own all of the intellectual property?
2. Why do industry still have the perception that universities (a) will not deliver a 'short' piece of consultancy work to time, and (b) in a research collaboration will do what they want to do, and not what the industrial partner wants them to.
3. We need to build cross academic institution, multidisciplinary research teams to be able to collaborate with our European colleagues, and to compete on a global stage. The RAE exercise prevents us from building those teams.

4. The quality of graduate recruits, both at postgraduate level, and into industry, is not satisfactory. We need to excite young people about science and technology again. To do this we need to start (as the nanotechnologists will have to) from the bottom up in primary and junior schools.
5. What auditing/monitoring procedures are in place to look at the effectiveness of Government initiatives designed to help industry?

There are many other things that I would like to have debated alongside these issues, and would welcome being party to those debates.

Best regards

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Director

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