

Lambert Business Review – University Collaboration

Response of University of Wales Swansea (UWS)

1. Identification of best practice:

- a) The University has a strong track record of collaborative research and development, typically funded via European Union, EPSERC or the Knowledge Exploitation Fund. Projects usually attract 2 or more partners, each contributing significant expertise.
- b) The University has a seed fund for the support of spinout companies. The WDA funded Wales Spinout Programme offers academic staff/students an interest free loan of £25k, plus incubation space. In addition, the University manages a smaller start-up grant for graduates/alumni of £5,500. Selected spinout companies that have succeeded in attracting seed funding, may be in a position of acquiring second stage funding and ultimately securing an incubation space at one of the regional Technium centres (see below)
- c) UWS is major partner in the flagship Technium development throughout the South West Wales region. Seven Technium centres, linked to specialist University research and development, are to be constructed in the area. One of which – Digital Technium – is currently being constructed on the University campus. With an estimated value of £55m, creating a capacity for 200 new companies the seven Technium centres attracts mix of funding from the private and public sector. Partners committed to the project include IBM, Ford, Agilent, Calsonic, SONY, Agenda Television and BP (amongst others).
- d) UWS has five Centres of Excellence for Technology and Industrial Collaboration (CETICS). These centres are embedded in areas of significant research expertise, and their prime objective is to build productive links between UWS and industry.

2. Main barriers:

- a) Speed of response from fund holders need to be accelerated (to efficiently exploit IP, institutions and entrepreneurs need funding without undue delay)
- b) Streamlining of funding applications – devolution of budgets from government bodies to HEIs for the exploitation of IP would be beneficial to academia and business, due to the decreased lead times in accessing the finance.
- c) Reduction in bureaucracy.

3. Graduate Skills:

- a) A general observation is that correlation between academic excellence and entrepreneurship skills has been traditionally low.

4. Financial Constraints

- a) UWS has not as yet noticed a discernable influence on the level of demand for research and skills since the introduction of R&D tax credits; however this may develop in the longer term.

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