



Technology Transfer Surveys and the Call for Access Metrics

Through education, research innovation and publication, universities have continually translated knowledge into public goods. In the past 25 years, universities have increasingly facilitated the movement of research into the public domain through the use of patenting and licensing agreements. While university technology transfer offices (TTOs) acknowledge their mission of advancing academic research to benefit society and ensuring public access to university innovations, these offices are often constrained by their limited human and financial resources. Largely due to the difficulty of data collection, TTOs have evaluated themselves based on approximate measures of knowledge dissemination. The only annual survey evaluating the performance of university TTOs is administered by the Association of University Technology Managers (AUTM), and includes revenue-based parameters: research expenditure, licenses and options executed or active, startup companies formed, invention disclosures, patent applications and patents issued, and licensing revenue. The use of such indicators fails to capture the value of university innovation to the public and provides incentives to maximize short-term returns at the expense of long-term growth. We propose a more robust and accurate measure of university success in the field of technology transfer. The Access Metrics Index seeks to implement technology transfer metrics based on the dissemination and accessibility of university-developed research and innovation.

University Role in Global Access

In recognition of this shortcoming, more than 60 top research institutions have endorsed the Stanford Nine Points, which explicitly recognizes universities' role in ensuring access to life-saving treatments in the developing world: "Universities should strive to construct licensing arrangements in ways that ensure that these underprivileged populations have low- or no-cost access to adequate quantities of these medical innovations." Adoption of the Nine Points, although laudable, falls short of implementing concrete policies that produce measurable impact. Although there are numerous instances of universities attempting to implement licensing policies that ensure access in the developing world, the norms for technology transfer are reinforced by the current metrics and incentive system. In the words of Carol Mimura, UC Berkeley's director of technology transfer, "If you measure success only by the amount of royalties and fees you bring in, then your licensing practices will reflect that." Unless the current standards of success are modified, TTOs will continue to face the impossible paradox of operating as a for-profit department within a nonprofit institution committed to the global public good.

Access Metrics Index

To this end, the Access Metrics Index (AMI) is in the process of defining access-based parameters by which technology transfer operations may be measured. The metrics will assess universities' institutional commitment to accessibility of university innovation and technology transfer policies that serve the university mission. The Access Metrics Index, which will supplement AUTM's Annual Licensing Activity Survey, is being developed in conjunction with technology transfer officers, experts in intellectual property law, and other university administrators.

Over the coming months, these metrics will continue to be refined in collaboration with stakeholders and experts in the field of technology transfer and intellectual property law. The development of these metrics will culminate in a pilot project to be launched by the end of 2009, which will demonstrate the feasibility of implementing access-oriented metrics and define areas of the survey that require revision. The results of this pilot project will be widely publicized and will commence a wider campaign to promote universal adoption of access metrics.

Additional Information (full text available on request)

1. Ashley J. Stevens and April E. Effort, "Using Academic License Agreements to Promote Global Social Responsibility." *Journal of the Licensing Executives Society* (Les Nouvelles) (June 2008).
2. Jill Sorensen and Donald Chambers. "Evaluating academic technology transfer performance by how well access to knowledge is facilitated—defining an access metric." *Journal of Technology Transfer*. 2008, vol. 33, issue 5
3. Matthew Herder and Josephine Johnston, "Licensing for Knowledge Transfer in Human Genetics Research: A Study of Business Models for Licensing and Technology Transfer in Human Genetics Patents." A report for Health Canada, Ottawa, Canada (May 2007).