**OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION, AND INDUSTRY RELATIONS (OTIIR)**

**ANNUAL REPORT FY 2020-2021**

The Office of Technology, Innovation, and Industry Relations (OTIIR) connects University of California at Merced (UCM) faculty, students, and alumni with business partners to commercialize their innovations, develop new research, start new ventures, and strengthen and diversify the economy.  Department goals are to:

* Build infrastructure that supports innovation, entrepreneurship, and technology commercialization activities.
* Promote disclosure of discoveries first and publishing second and encourage dialogue on how research can be applied more broadly to benefit society.
* Facilitate monthly forums (virtual & in-person) where early-stage entrepreneurs can get basic legal assistance and engage with industry research partners.
* Secure permanent funding to recruit and retain subject matter experts to double our support capacity.
* Invest in technology and software solutions to fast track the search for market viability and commercialization opportunities; and
* Develop relationships with industry partners who are interested in investing in the research at UCM

Building an infrastructure that supports innovation, entrepreneurship and technology commercialization activities is a key part of OTIIR.  This past year, we had eight invention disclosures, ten US patent filings, two US patent issues, and approximately six agreements were executed.

Currently, there are 26 active intellectual property cases with one provisional application and 25 non-provisional applications.  UCM’s commitment to grow these numbers are necessary to building this infrastructure.

Engaging with faculty and students to establish the expectation of disclosing their discoveries first and publishing second is a necessary step in building this infrastructure.  This engagement can also encourage dialogues on how research can be applied more broadly to benefit society.  This past year, there was outreach and engagement with approximately 55 faculty members, 25 graduate students, and 75 undergraduate students.  Future outreach and engagement with additional faculty and students is planned to continue to develop this infrastructure.

Outreach and engagement include holding monthly forums (virtual & in-person) where early-stage entrepreneurs can get basic legal assistance and engage with industry research partners.  This past year, OTIIR coordinated with Nixon Peabody to facilitate a webinar that educated faculty and students about corporate formation.  Continued outreach will include “Lunch & Learn” webinar series to educate faculty and students about intellectual property, licensing, funding, start-up formation, and commercialization of intellectual property.

The ability to create the infrastructure to support innovation, entrepreneurship and technology commercialization activities and engage faculty and student is not possible without the necessary funding.  Thus, OTIIR plans to secure permanent funding to recruit and retain subject matter experts to double our support capacity.  This is to also support the anticipated surge in research activity due to the push to get to R1 by 2030.  OTIIR intends to create a Proof of Concept (POC) program as well as scale current campus staffing infrastructure to get to a state of readiness consistent with that of a mature campus.

Funding will also be used to invest in technology and software solutions to fast track the search for market viability and commercialization opportunities.  Subscriptions to necessary programs and software solutions, such as In-Part & TechConnect which require annual licenses, can be used for marketing and licensing of UCM technology.

Lastly, OTIIR aims to develop relationships with industry partners who are interested in investing in the research at UCM.  This has been and continues to be accomplished through multiple agreements such as non-disclosure agreements, intent-to-use, license, and option to license agreements. Additionally, OTIIR participates in various programs that encourage faculty and students to engage with industry partners. For example, thirteen teams in last year’s NSF i-Corps Connectors participated in Innovate 2 Grow, Engineering Service Learning, and other classes. This semester, UCM has 12 faculty members and 286 students participating. Additionally, Blackstone Launch-Pad includes an Innovation + Design Hub Speaker Series, Workshops, and Ideas Competitions. At the Blackstone Annual Conference, UCM will be represented by eight student entrepreneurs who will pitch university-funded IP to investors. In the future, OTIIR plans to partner with other organizations such as Bakar Labs at Berkeley, Nucleate.xyz leadership, other fellowship, and bio venture organizations. UCM may also open an accelerator office space for faculty life sciences and engineering startups.