

University of Texas Vice-Chancellor Speaks on Tech Transfer in El Paso Collaborations Transcend Borders, Build Bridges Between U.S and Mexico

(EL PASO, TX. July 25, 2008) Keith McDowell, Ph.D., Vice Chancellor for Research and Technology Transfer, The University of Texas System, was honored at a July 15th reception at the El Paso Club in the Chase Bank building in downtown El Paso on July 15th. The reception and discussion was hosted by The Trans Pecos/El Paso Regional Center of Innovation and Commercialization and by The Hunt Family Foundation.

Dr. McDowell was in El Paso to address the impact of technology transfer between the commercial and educational sectors, and the economic development that results from such collaboration. In his presentation, McDowell discussed the elements necessary for a stable and thriving “innovation ecosystem”, and affirmed the UT System’s continued funding and support of tech transfer programs through UTEP.

Tech transfer may not be listed among the imports and exports between the United States and Mexico, but just the same; it is being traded between both nations with increasing frequency and fueling rapid economic growth on both sides of the border.

In Texas’ 6th largest city, The Trans Pecos/El Paso Regional Center of Innovation and Commercialization (TPEP RCIC) has facilitated and fostered just such international tech transfer and, as a result, the El Paso region has enjoyed a surge in economic development. Growing numbers of alternative energy, biosciences, and life sciences companies are setting up shop in the region, while telecommunications and data center operations are moving headquarters or opening satellite offices in the growing technopolis.

Nor has the surge in emerging technologies and entrepreneurial endeavors escaped the notice of the Texas Emerging Technology Fund, venture capitalists, the Camino Real angels and other private funding sources that are investing in several new business ventures in the area.

The purpose of tech transfer is twofold. The newest scientific or technological concepts discovered in the hallowed halls of universities or created in the labs of research institutions require a practical use and process in order to obtain real value in the commercial or consumer marketplace.

Conversely; commercial, manufacturing and industrial interests often encounter needs in the marketplace they could leverage to their advantage, but lack the dedicated technological or research resources to develop the intellectual property to exploit the opportunity.

“Tech transfer provides the answer,” states Ebetuel Pallares, Executive Director TPEP RCIC. “Commercial entities manufacture and deliver new technologies to market, while universities and research institutions provide their knowledge and skills in developing technology for new products, services and materials for specific commercial uses. The mission of TPEP RCIC is to promote, support and improve tech transfer in the region, to demonstrate its benefits globally through education, advocacy, networking and communication, and to help bridge the gaps that inhibit entrepreneurial growth.”

McDowell noted that between 2002 and 2006, UT System had applied for 1656 patents, and 553 were issued. Furthermore, while the UT System had funded 66 new start-ups, the system has actually invested in over 250 companies. UTEP alone has generated 5 proposals and funded 2.

To that end, TPEP RCIC has developed tech transfer partnerships with University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso Community College, Texas Tech University, Paul Foster School of Medicine, Texas State University (via the Nanotechnology Colloquium), Texas A & M Agricultural Extension Facility in Pecos, Texas (via an ETF award received in Pecos, TX), and CIMAV (Centro de Investigación de Materiales Avanzados) in Mexico. In addition, a TPEP RCIC's board member also serves on the advisory committee to University of Texas at Austin's IC2 Institute.

About Vice Chancellor Keith McDowell, Ph.D.



Dr. Keith McDowell

Dr. Keith McDowell was named Vice Chancellor for Research and Technology Transfer at the University of Texas at Austin effective June 1, 2007. A chemist, McDowell returns to Texas and the UT System after four successful years as the first senior research and technology transfer executive at the University of Alabama. He joined the Alabama administration in 2003 after serving as Vice President for Research and Information Technology at UT Arlington, where he joined the faculty in 1991 as Chair of the Chemistry and Biochemistry department and later became Associate Dean of Science and then Dean of the Graduate School.

In his role as Vice Chancellor, McDowell will be responsible for developing and implementing strategies to expand and enhance research funding at UT System institutions.

McDowell will facilitate collaboration among the academic and health campuses to develop joint proposals to increase grants and contracts from external sources. McDowell will also assist UT institutions with research, technology development, technology transfer and commercialization. Additionally, he will also be responsible for fostering effective relationships among the university community, governmental entities, national laboratories, foundations, industry leaders, and the private sector. McDowell will also work closely with state economic development programs, specifically the Texas Enterprise Fund and Emerging Technology Fund.

In fiscal year (FY) 2007, the State of Texas invested \$1.7 billion in the 15 UT institutions through general revenue, enabling exploration, innovation and ingenuity while educating an advanced workforce. These funds leveraged \$1.8 billion for research endeavors, 14 start-up companies (66 in the last five years), 117 U.S. patents (553 in the last five years), and 655 invention disclosures (2,770 in the last five years), ultimately creating new jobs, products and services. <http://www.utexas.edu/>

About The Trans Pecos/El Paso Regional Center of Innovation and Commercialization

Established in 2007, the Trans Pecos/El Paso Regional Center of Innovation and Commercialization (TPEP RCIC), a Texas non-profit, serves as a catalyst for economic development. TPEP RCIC acts as a “cashless venture capital organization” and assists business in meeting the requirements to seek funding by the Texas Emerging Technologies Fund and / or private capital sources.

TPEP RCIC's in-depth investigative, research and evaluation processes culminate in the presentation of highly qualified candidates to venture capitalists and private funding entities resulting in a verifiable, consistent track record of reduced risks for investors and good rate of returns on investment, which has earned them the respect from the funding community in a relatively short period of time. In addition, the

agency excels in facilitating the transfer of technology from universities and national labs into the commercial sector.

The TPEP RCIC is comprised of qualified specialists and network of partners from the Trans Pecos/El Paso region who possess a unique blend of experience in high technology, start-up operations, economic development, venture funding, and globalization. They also have connections with financial institutions and the financial community at-large, which offers a deeper understanding of the requirements posed by funding entities and provides connections with capital resources. For more information, please visit: www.tpeprcic.org

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