

**Academy for Entrepreneurial Leadership  
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign  
Working Papers and Research Notes**

**The Role of US Universities in Support of  
Entrepreneurship for Economic Development –  
A Classification of Activities & Bibliography  
of Best Practices**

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## I. Education

- a. Land grant institutions
  - Typically in rural locations initially, providing education in engineering and agriculture, and serving students who would return to family businesses
  - Outreach, economic development mission
- b. Historically: development of majors derived from and driven by specific occupational categories; education for professions that include many small businesses
- c. Career programs in community colleges, with business ownership focus
  - Examples: programs for funeral home directors and massage therapists require one or more courses in small business management
- d. Entrepreneurship education, including co-curricular activities
- e. Continuing/adult education, degree and non-degree, including workforce training programs in community colleges

## II. Outreach

- a. Extension - Cooperative Extension historically; Manufacturing Extension more recently
- b. Neighborhood revitalization through economic power
  - Using economic power to buy within and rehab neighborhoods around the university (e.g., Syracuse University, Rensselaer Polytechnic)
- c. Small business outreach centers, professionally staffed - e.g., Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) and Minority Business Assistance Centers
- d. Student-centered outreach  
Examples:
  - Student small business consulting (Small Business Institutes, SBI)
  - Engineering capstone courses that do projects for smaller manufacturing firms

- Legal clinics focusing on intellectual property, small business issues
  - Internships in startups, incubators, venture funds
- e. Programming for alumni entrepreneurs (MIT, Cornell)

### **III. Academic expertise**

- a. Consulting by faculty and staff (pro bono and fee-based); membership on boards
- b. Partnerships with local organizations to focus on economic development
- Examples:
- Urban planning & community development faculty and graduate students work on downtown revitalization projects, which support small businesses
  - Arts and business faculty partner with local arts organizations to support the economic strength of the arts community
- c. Loan of faculty and administrators to specific businesses or other organizations to solve a specific problem or advance a specific initiative
- d. Creation of entrepreneurial leaves of absence to accommodate an industrial partner (perhaps so as not to lose the faculty member but also to assist a business partner)
- e. Research on topics related to entrepreneurship and economic/community development

### **IV. Technology development and commercialization of research**

- a. Licensing of university technologies to startups, and consultation by faculty inventors with startups
- b. Startups by faculty and graduates, drawing on university technologies or knowledge
- c. Industry partners programs in R&D centers that focus on entrepreneurial firms
- d. Creation, growth of number of positions of Director of Corporate Partnerships
- e. Business incubators
- f. Research parks
- g. Venture funds and seed funds

## **V. University mission**

- a. Legislators amending public university charters, or private universities amending missions, to add economic development to teaching, reaching and service missions
- b. Creation, growth of number of positions of VP for Economic Development

## **VI. Government policy**

- a. State and federal legislation to support university-industry partnerships and cooperative research (SBIR, Cooperative Research Act, NSF Engineering Research Centers, etc)
- b. Bayh-Dole Act of 1980

## **Preliminary Bibliography of Best Practices**

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