Use a comprehensive reporting process to solidify industry relationships

A standardized method for universities to report on their relationships with corporate partners may be the Holy Grail of corporate relations, but so far it has remained elusive. In lieu of such a find, universities are streamlining processes for gathering and reporting the details of their partnerships, with attention to the culture and structure of their own institution and customized to the specific needs of each corporate partner.

Although each university is different, and reporting is mostly customized for each company, the fundamental aspects of reporting on university-industry partnerships are the same for universities of all sizes. For one thing, the person or persons who are reporting to companies must have a solid understanding and knowledge of what is going on in the partnership, and they must also have enough institutional knowledge to know where to go for the information they need to convey to the company partner.

Why customization is essential

The Ohio State University has several units that might get an incoming request for reporting from corporate partners, but the requests always are handled by the Office of Corporate Engagement. The office also gets requests that have been gathered by its own team of engagement managers, each of whom has their own portfolio of key strategic partners.

When the engagement managers at OSU meet with the corporate partners, they ask about their needs in five key areas: research, talent, continuing education, commercialization, technology transfer, and philanthropy.

Even with the five defined areas of interaction with partner companies implemented at OSU, the type of presentation back to the company varies. "We talk to companies about how to improve our relationship," said **Edward Pauline**, director of business development at OSU. "We tell them we're going to help them build a strategy of people on campus to help them with a solution. As part of that process, we'll be developing a report for the company based on that activity."

There are many factors that affect how that report will be customized. It may be tailored to the type of funding, the length of the relationship, or the type of formal agreement. Other critical factors could be the length of time the company would like the report to be based upon or the requirements of its recruiting department. "It could be for the last five years or the last year. Those timeframes provide significantly different numbers," said Pauline. "When it comes to talent, if a company has a mature, well-resourced recruiting arm, they might want different statistics about the recruiting than a business without that mature structure."

"A lot of that will depend on the company we're talking to," said Pauline. "If we're talking to a person who has a role of visibility across the enterprise and can talk intelligently about the five areas that I discussed earlier, that document is highly useful. If it's a person in a specific role, then that report would be customized to that person's area of expertise. We haven't identified the Holy Grail for company reports -- that's something I would love -- but the uniqueness of each partner we have requires that customization."

Too much information

At Caltech, the Office of Technology Transfer and Corporate Partnerships is the central location that handles reports to industry. **Mary Beth Campbell**, director of corporate partnerships, notes that the institution has abandoned standardized end-of-year summaries altogether, because they were delivering more information than the company wanted or needed. "We found that it's more important instead to have someone on our side -- an alliance manager -- and someone on their side, and that there is regular communication between them. If there is any information the person from the company side needs, they know where to go for that information, and that we can help them pull it together."

At Carnegie Mellon University, separate units in the schools and colleges handle their own reporting to partner companies. The move from a single point of contact to a distributed model of corporate relations staff was made a few years ago to strengthen relationships with the faculty and to ensure a deep understanding of the research. "We walk down the hall to visit with the faculty to understand their research as opposed to walking across campus," said **George Darakos**, director of partnerships at CMU's School of Computer Science. "It makes a difference. Relationships are everything. When you have a strong relationship with the faculty, the better you can advocate for them outside of the university."

The distributed model raises the need for internal communication. "If a company is interested in

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research that's more engineering-focused, I reach out to the College of Engineering," said Darakos. I don't have as big a grasp on everything going on over there, which is why it's nice to have a team like us there. It creates more touch points on campus, which I think is good."

Darakos relies on a team of three to five people who focus on industry and government relationships. Each team member has a portfolio of companies for whom they are the liaison on campus. "We guide the companies, depending on their interests," said Darakos. "If they say we want to connect with people, we help them connect. Our job is to understand the needs of the company, which will vary."

The report generation process

The customization process begins at OSU during meetings with corporate partners, after which OSU relationship managers submit a research request form. The form was created to provide some structure around incoming requests for customized research reports. **(To view the form go to http://techtransfercentral.com/ttt718-caltech/.)**

What should be included in a report for a corporate partner? Pauline notes that "the most important thing to understand is that something may be interesting, but not that useful to the company. We want to be sure that the content is something that they will look at and that it's relevant to the company's needs before we take the time to create it," he emphasized.

When a report request is submitted, the OSU Office of Corporate Engagement first talks internally about how they can bring the right academic partners together to present back to the company.The first step in generating a report is to engage the lead researcher, who can reach out to the appropriate person in the various offices throughout the university.

"The university, and I've found most universities, don't really have an easy way to get snapshots of information," said Pauline. "There might be five different databases. In the absence of a very specific request, it's hard to know where we go for the information. Do we need to mine our recruiter relations system, one of our three employer relations systems, our database for sponsored research agreements, or our philanthropic database? Our researchers are always trying to figure out which database to pull this information from. We have a data services specialist who is responsible for hunting down this type of information."

An engagement map

Improvements to overcome the obstacles presented by multiple data sources are in the works. The office uses Salesforce to manage opportunities and interactions with partner companies as well as potential future partners. "This has been a tremendous help," said Pauline. "We're working towards [Salesforce] being our campuswide CRM. We've also developed through a partnership with the Industry Liaison Office and our Corporate Relations Office over in Advancement, something called a corporate engagement search tool. Anyone on campus can go to the website, enter a company name, and it will give a snapshot of activity and will pull data from the variety of databases that I mentioned earlier."

The Office of Corporate Engagement uses the services of OSU's Business Intelligence and Mapping Unit to provide an "Engagement Map" -- a map with the company at the center and arms showing where the company is engaged at the university. "It gets very specific, it goes down to the individual researchers and departments," said Pauline. "This is created either at the request of the company or for one of our people who is going to make a visit to the company. We are trying to reduce the 'dumb factor' internally about what's going on between our university and the company. The worst thing is to go into the company and they bring up some sort of engagement that you're not aware of. That distracts the entire conversation."

For key accounts, the OSU engagement office creates a Stewardship Report, which is presented in magazine format similar to what is produced by the Advancement Office for donors to the university. The office employs a marketing communications director who customizes the documents and ensures that university branding is consistent.

Reporting in three categories

Caltech has three categories of company partners -- corporate partners, industry partners, and strategic partners -- and methods of reporting are different for each group.

Corporate partners are part of the Corporate Partners Program, which is a paid membership program costing $50,000 and providing these benefits:

- Concierge Access to Caltech Faculty
  - Faculty Meetings at Caltech
  - Faculty Visits to Company
  - Research Roundtables with Faculty

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- Technical Research Service

• Sponsoring a Partial Scholarship or SURF Student

• Networking and Insider's View Opportunities

- Corporate Networking Events

- Invitations to Caltech Conferences and Seminars

- Caltech Publications

- Corporate Partnerships Newsletter

- Annual Activity Report

These are typically companies that want to learn more about how they might work with Caltech in the future, and they are given one-on-one attention from someone from the Office of Technology Transfer and Corporate Partnerships. "It's really hand-holding to help them figure out the best way to work with Caltech," said Campbell.

The process of generating reports for the corporate partners starts with a conversation. "We sit down and write out what our objectives are for the year," said Campbell. "We point out what metrics they would want to see. We do this on a company-by-company basis. Usually it's that they want to be exposed to research in areas XYZ or that they want to get students involved as interns." At the end of the year, the corporate partners receive a "glossy" report of the metrics. **(See Figures 1 and 2 for samples of the action plan and summary report.)**

All companies sponsoring research at Caltech are referred to as industry partners. Typically, their reporting requirements include receiving the written or verbal research results from the researcher. Partnership officers from the Office of Technology Transfer and Corporate Partnerships sometimes also help the faculty member report out to the industry partner. "We also like to share with them, to the extent that we have a relationship with them, any qualitative stories that came out of the project," Campbell says.

Caltech's strategic partners are industry partners who have committed a certain amount of money for a period of time, often in more than one area -- research and gifting, for example. The university holds an annual, or sometimes twice-annual, research day for strategic partners where they a provided updates on all their projects. "The strategic partners also tour the labs if they have contributed money for purchasing equipment, or they meet with students who are benefitting from the partners' gifted funding," Campbell adds.

The Office of Technology Transfer and Corporate Partnerships provides a corporate liaison for each corporate and strategic partner, who is

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Figure 1

Caltech

[COMPANY LOGO]

CALTECH PARTNERS PROGRAM (CP2)
COMPANY – CALTECH ACTION PLAN
DATE

Period of Membership:

Company Point of Contact(s):

Caltech Point of Contact:

Company Goals for Working with Caltech:

- *E.g. Talent acquisition (grad/undergrad)*
- *Identify research projects for possible Company-Caltech collaboration*
- *Better understand research happening at Caltech*
- *High-visibility strategic partnership*
- *Other*

Objectives for Membership year:

- *E.g. identify groups working on topic X*
- *Recruit additional students from Caltech*
- *Joint symposium on topic X*
- *Structure terms for a strategic partnership*

Specific Actions to be Taken:

- *E.g. Company: attend recruiting fair*
- *Company: support X SURF students*
- *Company: identify scientists who will help organize symposium*
- *Caltech: organize 1 day of meetings with faculty working on topic X*
- *Caltech: forward news related to topic X to Company*
- *Caltech: Submit annual activity report*

Tracking Progress:

- *E.g. Monthly phone calls to monitor progress on actions*
- *Two Company visits to Caltech*

COLLABORATION INNOVATION ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Source: Caltech Office of Technology Transfer and Corporate Partnerships

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expected to know everything about the relationship. “For industry partners,” said Campbell, “it depends on the project and how much the faculty member wants the office’s support. It also depends on how much we feel there is a possibility to build on the relationship and for it to grow into more than a single sponsored research project.”

The office’s backend system that keeps track of industry-sponsored research agreements and functions as a CRM provides critical support for their reporting activities. “We can measure touch points to a company,” said Campbell. “This also benefits us internally for when we go out to meet with a faculty member. We can quickly pull a list of all the projects they have going on and we can see historically what they’ve done. And we can ask them how it’s going and then update the CRM throughout the year. Then it’s much easier for when there is a request for information from a sponsor, we can quickly pull up that information in our database.”

Show breadth of activity

Good reporting can lead to better, deeper relationships between a university and its partners because it can raise awareness of the breadth of a university-industry partnership, Pauline stresses.

“A person may think they’ve only been doing a lot of research with Ohio State, but come to realize that we’re doing a lot of recruiting, our foundation’s been active with the institution, they’ve licensed a couple of products from the institution -- that sort of comprehensive narrative. The appreciation that develops for the overall relationship leads to more opportunities to arise, because it demonstrates that overall we have a very good working relationship,” he said. “We have a good sense of what the activities are. We’re now aligned on messaging back to the company. There’s comfort in knowing that we know who is actually doing work for the company. That eliminates some frustration that might develop otherwise.”

If reports to industry are to be meaningful, the university needs to have a process in place that enables their corporate relationship managers to cross over into all the areas of industry activity and get the data needed to offer a comprehensive picture, Pauline adds. The process may vary from university to university, but the end result is better reporting that leads to better university-industry relations.

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Figure 2: Caltech-InGen Partnership Summary

InGen became a member of Caltech’s Corporate Partners Program on July 9, 2018. Some highlights of this membership year include:

- Development and agreement on an Action Plan, August 1, 2018
- Three visits by InGen to Caltech’s campus, including a meeting between InGen’s CEO and Caltech’s Vice Provost for Research
- Two Caltech students hired by InGen
- A Joint Workshop on DNA Editing for Dinosaur De-Extinction

Action Plan:

InGen and Caltech developed the enclosed Action Plan and signed off on August 1, 2018. The major goals laid out in the Action Plan were achieved over this past year.

“Our closer ties to InGen built over the past year have been invaluable in providing insights into problems and challenges in DNA de-extinction. Our interactions have led to innovation opportunities that are intellectually rewarding for Caltech and beneficial to InGen’s work.”

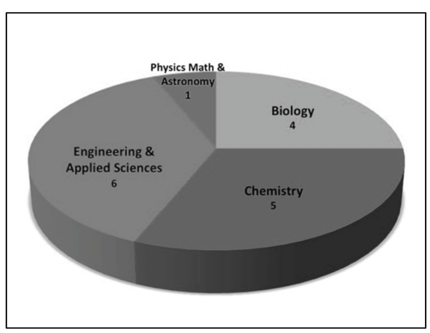
~ Professor X

Title

Visits:

InGen scientists and executives met with Caltech faculty during three visits to campus.

- September 15: John Doe and Jane Doe met with Professors X, Y, Z
- January 12: John Doe and Jane Doe met with students from program 123
- May 5: Vice Provost for Research met with CEO



Number and distribution of faculty from Caltech who met with InGen scientists over the past year.

Student Hires:

- John Doe – will be starting as Project Manager, Discovery Research
  - Quote
- Jane Doe – will be starting as Research Scientist, Process Research
  - Quote

Joint Workshop:

On March 1, a Joint Workshop was held. The Agenda is enclosed. Over 200 attendees registered, from over five different countries.

Source: Caltech Office of Technology Transfer and Corporate Partnerships

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"If there is an example where I can say, our relationship with Company X behaved exactly like Company Y, here's what we do to satisfy their reporting needs, that would be awesome," said Pauline. But until that happens, reports for OSU and other universities will be customized for each company partner.

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