



The University of North Carolina

POST OFFICE BOX 2688, CHAPEL HILL, NC 27515-2688

ERSKINE B. BOWLES, *President*

Telephone: (919) 962-1000 FAX: (919) 845-9695

E-mail: ebowles@northcarolina.edu

Constituent Universities
Appalachian State
University

East Carolina
University

Elizabeth City
State University

Fayetteville State
University

North Carolina
Agricultural and
Technical State
University

North Carolina
Central University

North Carolina
School of the Arts

North Carolina
State University
at Raleigh

University of
North Carolina
at Asheville

University of
North Carolina
at Chapel Hill

University of
North Carolina
at Charlotte

University of
North Carolina
at Greensboro

University of
North Carolina
at Pembroke

University of
North Carolina
at Wilmington


Western Carolina
University

Winston-Salem
State University

Constituent High School
North Carolina
School of Science
and Mathematics

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August 26, 2009

TO: Chancellors
FROM: Erskine Bowles 
RE: Tech Transfer Report

You have in your packets a report that our research and economic development office has been working on for the past six months, with a lot of really valuable help from IBM, folks from your campuses, and others from the private sector.

I asked our staff to work on this because I think it's something we don't do very well right now, and I think it's something we can fix. If we fix it, we can solve more of the biggest problems of the world faster and we can remind the people of our state again what a great University can do.

Right now nobody's happy with what we're doing in tech transfer:

- Faculty complain that they send something into our tech transfer offices and never hear anything back.
- Tech transfer offices complain they're asked to do too much with not enough staff, and don't know how to prioritize which inventions they work on.
- Campus development offices and research offices argue about who gets to talk to a company for a donation or sponsored research project and who gets to claim credit if they get some money.
- Business leaders tell me they want to turn our great ideas into new companies or products, but sometimes we make them negotiate for months over a few dollars in licensing fees. They don't want to work with us *because we make it too hard.*

We do a billion dollars worth of research every year at UNC and we can be very proud of that. This year with stimulus money we're going to do far more than that. Now we've got to find ways to make sure more of the research we do turn into products and ideas and services people can use.

Federal agencies that invest in our science – the folks who send us 66% of our research funding -- are demanding more and more results-oriented research. State leaders see all the research money we are getting and wonder what comes out the

back. And private companies – who right now only account for 6% of our research funding – want to see real technologies and products coming out of their investments. I think we can grow our share of private sector investment – and insulate ourselves against the uncertainty of federal funding – if we get tech transfer right.

And there's another reason we've got to do better. We've got huge problems in our economy, and we've got big answers to those problems locked up in our brains. We've pledged through UNC Tomorrow that we are going to help solve those problems. This report outlines a plan to do that.

Steve is going to go through some of the details of the report, but let me tell you three big things I want to happen over the next few months:

1. I want us to figure out what each of our strengths are – what we can be world class at – and focus our research in those areas. Some of those will be campus specific; others will be ideas that we can work on together. While we were working on this report companies told us they're sick of hearing us say “we're good at nanotechnology” – everybody says that. What they want to know is what we are best at. We can't be best at everything, but we can be best at a few things, and if we are, the world will beat a path to our doors.
2. I want us to figure out how we can reward – not penalize – faculty members who spend time moving ideas out of the labs and into the world. That kind of thinking is not for everyone, but those who are good at it need to know that UNC is a place where they can do that. We need to find a way to make it “legal” for a faculty member to be entrepreneurial.
3. I want us to figure out how to make the process of technology transfer go faster. That may mean developing quick, easy agreements, like Carolina has with its Carolina Express License. It may mean establishing people that are in regular contact with key companies, like NC State has. That may mean giving some things away or letting faculty pursue them on their own, with the idea that money will flow back to the campus later. I just want it to work faster and better.

As you might guess, I'd like to start doing this tomorrow. But I'm a patient guy – I'm learning. So we've laid out a schedule that asks you to figure out how this will work on your campus starting now and continuing through next August.

On some campuses, this is going to bring some real culture change – and it won't work without your strong leadership. So I'm asking you to pull together your best innovators,

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leaders, visionary thinkers, local business leaders – so we can get the way we do innovation and technology development right.

There's going to be a lot of talk about innovation in this state over the next year, and I want us to lead – through the research we are doing with stimulus funding, through the ways we encourage our faculty to be more entrepreneurial and through the ways we work with corporate partners in solving big problems. If you or someone else on campus has a big idea about innovation or tech transfer, this is the time to do it.

Attachment

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
Sponsored Program Proposal Awards
Comparison by Sponsor
Fiscal Year 2008

Sponsor	Number	% of Total	Dollars	% of Total
United States Federal Government				
Corporation for National and Community Service	11	0.14%	\$2,842,971	0.26%
Library of Congress	0	0.00%	\$0	0.00%
National Aeronautics and Space Administration	54	0.71%	\$5,008,960	0.45%
National Foundation for the Arts and Humanities	13	0.17%	\$2,573,415	0.23%
National Historical Publications and Records Commission	0	0.00%	\$0	0.00%
National Science Foundation	488	6.40%	\$88,008,064	7.91%
Nuclear Regulatory Commission	0	0.00%	\$0	0.00%
Peace Corps	0	0.00%	\$0	0.00%
Small Business Administration	7	0.09%	\$2,650,919	0.24%
Tennessee Valley Authority	0	0.00%	\$0	0.00%
U. S. Department of Agriculture	166	2.18%	\$30,883,726	2.78%
U. S. Department of Commerce	62	0.81%	\$15,082,577	1.36%
U. S. Department of Defense	226	2.96%	\$40,217,123	3.62%
U. S. Department of Education	108	1.42%	\$55,423,027	4.98%
U. S. Department of Energy	119	1.56%	\$15,289,889	1.37%
U. S. Department of Health and Human Services	150	1.97%	\$40,219,320	3.62%
U. S. DHHS National Institutes of Health	1212	15.89%	\$399,810,502	35.94%
U. S. Department of Homeland Security	4	0.05%	\$866,370	0.08%
U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development	3	0.04%	\$689,513	0.06%
U. S. Department of the Interior	43	0.56%	\$3,337,755	0.30%
U. S. Department of Justice	5	0.07%	\$967,916	0.09%
U. S. Department of Labor	0	0.00%	\$0	0.00%
U. S. Department of State	1	0.01%	\$10,400	0.00%
U. S. Department of Transportation	21	0.28%	\$9,302,205	0.84%
U. S. Department of the Treasury	1	0.01%	\$99,552	0.01%
U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs	1	0.01%	\$61,808	0.01%
U. S. Environmental Protection Agency	43	0.56%	\$10,669,524	0.96%
U. S. Institute of Peace	0	0.00%	\$0	0.00%
U. S. International Development Cooperation Agency	7	0.09%	\$9,083,799	0.82%
All Other Federal Agencies	22	0.29%	\$2,394,632	0.22%
Total Requests for United States Federal Government	2767	36.27%	\$735,493,966	66.12%
State Government				
State of North Carolina	491	6.44%	\$95,614,584	8.60%
All Other States	34	0.45%	\$3,005,384	0.27%
Total Requests for State Government	525	6.88%	\$98,619,968	8.87%
Local Government				
N. C. Local Government	170	2.23%	\$5,658,291	0.51%
All Other Local Government	9	0.12%	\$3,010,961	0.27%
Total Requests for Local Government	179	2.35%	\$8,669,252	0.78%
Foundations				
N. C. Foundations	175	2.29%	\$20,057,275	1.80%
All Other Foundations	393	5.15%	\$54,891,933	4.93%
Total Requests for Foundations	568	7.45%	\$74,949,208	6.74%
Commerce (Business and Industry)				
N. C. Business and Industry	351	4.60%	\$10,234,574	0.92%
All Other Business and Industry	1368	17.93%	\$61,908,741	5.57%
Total Requests for Commerce (Business and Industry)	1719	22.54%	\$72,143,315	6.49%
Associations				
N. C. Associations	91	1.19%	\$1,089,873	0.10%
All Other Associations	236	3.09%	\$18,878,051	1.70%
Total Requests for Associations	327	4.29%	\$19,967,924	1.80%
Educational/Research Institutions				
N. C. Institutions	238	3.12%	\$18,362,509	1.65%
All Other Institutions	778	10.20%	\$47,227,330	4.25%
Total Requests for Educational/Research Institutions	1016	13.32%	\$65,589,839	5.90%
Not-for-Profit Organizations				
N. C. Non-profit Organizations	221	2.90%	\$10,921,343	0.98%
All Other Non-profit Organizations	97	1.27%	\$7,006,963	0.63%
Total Requests for Not-for-Profit Organizations	318	4.17%	\$17,928,306	1.61%
Other Sponsors				
Other N. C. Sponsors	48	0.63%	\$5,556,896	0.50%
All Other U. S. Sponsors	89	1.17%	\$6,764,614	0.61%
Foreign Sponsors	27	0.35%	\$967,960	0.09%
All other/uncodable	45	0.59%	\$5,702,080	0.51%
Total Requests for Other Sponsors	209	2.74%	\$18,991,550	1.71%
Interinstitutional Subagreements	528	6.92%	\$42,555,662	3.83%
UNC TOTAL AWARDS	7,628	100.00%	\$1,112,353,329	100.00%

Note: These figures do not include internal proposals (funding from institutional sources) which have been reported in the past.