



# Creating Communities of Innovation

ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY RESEARCH PARKS

January 4, 2019

Dr. Walter G. Copan  
Under Secretary of Commerce for Standards and Technology  
and Director of NIST  
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20899

Dear Dr. Copan:

On behalf of the Association of University Research Parks (AURP), we would like to thank you and your team at NIST for producing the NIST 'Green Paper' *Return on Investment Initiative for Unleashing American Innovation*.

AURP represents over 200 research parks in the U.S. As you may know, the world's first research park was started at Stanford University in the late 1950's, and building research parks and communities of innovation from federal research funding is a mission for many communities across the U.S.

AURP previously submitted testimony to NIST, and we are pleased to see many of these comments reflected in the Green Paper, and we would like to take this opportunity to re-emphasize several points that are highlighted in the paper. A number of these ideas were contained in the AURP White Papers: the *Power of Place* and the *Power of Place 2.0: the Power of Innovation*, both available at [www.aurp.net/power-of-place](http://www.aurp.net/power-of-place).

## **Flexibility in Use of Federal R and D Funds Towards Commercialization Goals:**

We continue to be interested in new flexible approaches for recipients of federal funds towards commercialization goals, which can help feed new companies to university research parks. These reforms include matters such as ability of researchers to employ federal funds towards patent costs and removing restrictions on intellectual property negotiations where corporate funded research is performed in facilities funded with tax-exempt bonds at universities.

## **Federal Researcher Entrepreneurial Workforce:**

Reforming conflict of interest rules are critically important for civil service researchers working in government owned and operated laboratories, such as NIH. Creating new conflict of interest rules for federal researchers, similar to those employed at research universities, is vital where conflicts are managed by disinterested parties supervising the research units, with frequent and transparent

reporting and approval guidelines. Current federal conflict of interest statutes do not easily accommodate the role of a federal researcher working on entrepreneurial project, which is allowed by other federal statutes. This may require federal statutory reform, as has been the experience for public research universities at the state level in the U.S.

Additionally, to ensure that federal research jobs remain attractive to younger researchers, ensuring these entrepreneurially-minded researchers have defined pathways to experiment with assignments or entrepreneurial leave is necessary. Use of Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) assignments where a federal researcher might be appointed to a research university to work on is one vehicle. The Department of Energy has an entrepreneurial leave policy for researchers at Sandia Labs where researchers are allowed up-to-three years leave time to work on entrepreneurial projects, with a guarantee that the position will be open during the time period.

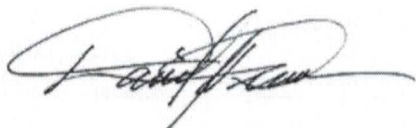
### **Federal Lab Academic and Private Sector Engagement:**

Given the number of government owned-government operated federal laboratories in the Greater Washington region, it is critical to ensure that additional flexibility be granted. These might include expanded Other Transactions Authority (OTA) and expanded Enhanced Use Lease Authority (EULA) and other authorities that are currently limited to specific federal agencies, but might be given broader application across all agencies to unleash more innovation. For example, NASA Ames Research Park in California has Google as a major tenant and NASA Ames is now building new workforce housing on federally owned land. Extending this idea to all federal labs to create Public Private Partnerships (P3) with universities and the private sector is an idea worth emulating as it can reduce commuting for researchers and finance new energy efficient buildings.

We enjoyed your visit to the AURP International Conference last fall at the University of Maryland and your comments about the *Return on Investment Initiative*. We look forward to working with you and other members of the Administration and Congress on reforming our laws and regulations concerning federally sponsored research.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide further feedback.

Sincerely yours,



Daniel J. Duncan  
President AURP

cc: Brian Darmody  
David Baker