Reviewed and approved by Iain Stewart

November 3, 2017

**University Intramural Research Collaborations**

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Organized by: National Research Council of Canada

Speaker: Iain Stewart, President, National Research Council (NRC)

**Takeaways and recommendations**

**The challenges**

* Government labs and academia have different cultures and it’s not always clear how they can work together.
* Collaborations between government labs and academia face legal barriers such as the Financial Administration Act, which makes it difficult for the research granting councils to fund academic teams that include government researchers. (The Office of the Comptroller General has proposed a solution that is currently being reviewed internally.)
* Government has different intellectual property regimes from universities, and even among universities there is no standardization. The NRC is currently addressing this challenge by developing standardized IP models that will make such collaborations easier.
* Governments generally have tighter security policies (e.g. secure access to buildings) which academic partners find onerous.
* The NRC’s need to focus on cost recovery has resulted in fewer universities using its facilities. In response, the NRC is looking to reduce the fees it charges to academia.
* Government labs and academia have different systems for terms of employment (e.g. different promotion mechanisms, and no sabbaticals in government) which can be a barrier to collaboration.

**The opportunities**

* Government labs, many of which already collaborate with industry and academia, need to be part of the solution to Canada’s innovation challenges by providing the “connective tissue” that matches public sector assets with private sector needs.
* Government labs have many assets that could be leveraged with academia to incent more public-private research collaborations. These include: long-term mandates, sustainable funding, highly qualified experts and large facilities.
* The NRC has buildings on campuses across Canada but more needs to be done to strengthen their research relationship with that university.
* There is an opportunity for the NRC to change its large-scale programs, which favour joint projects between NRC scientists and industry, to include more collaboration with academia.
* The NRC should be doing large-scale programs that respond to the government’s priorities (e.g. superclusters).
* Renewed NRC emphasis on exploratory research underpinning foundational, disruptive technologies (e.g. quantum computing) offer a powerful attraction to academic researchers.
* There is a need to take a shared approach (e.g. shared management, locations and teams) between the sophisticated equipment in government labs and research infrastructure in universities.
* NRC researchers should be adjunct professors at universities, and the NRC should have more graduate students and post-doctoral fellows working at its facilities.