

Monday, October 20, 2014

APLU-CGA Update

To: Council of Presidents

Cc: Council on Academic Affairs
Council on Governmental Affairs
Council on Research Policy & Graduate Education
Council on Strategic Communications
Commission on Innovation, Competitiveness, & Economic Prosperity

From: Peter McPherson, APLU President

Date: October 13, 2014

Re: Announcing APLU's Task Force on Managing University Intellectual Property



I write to announce that APLU has created a Task Force on Managing University Intellectual Property. The Task Force will begin its work by engaging in an examination of the purposes of university innovation, technology transfer, commercialization, and entrepreneurship, including a review of related materials and input from APLU members. In a few months, the Task Force will make recommendations to APLU and its membership on the most effective ways to reaffirm and communicate the purposes of university management of intellectual property as well as related policies and practices.

As you know, the patent troll legislative fight has been and continues to be hard fought. We expect Congress to again focus on patent/technology transfer legislation next year. Some opposed to our views have questioned whether universities are managing their intellectual property for the public good or only for their own gain. Responding to these and other concerns with a clear, articulate, and thoughtful message that all public research institutions can deliver is a central responsibility of the Task Force.

Among other steps, the Task Force will explore whether some institutions' policies and practices may be contributing to the perception that universities are engaged in technology transfer only for their own financial benefit. Such an example, albeit a seemingly small one, might be job postings for technology transfer directors that announce a performance metric focused on increasing revenue. Pressure on technology transfer offices to generate significant revenue, while undoubtedly coming in part from the current state of public university finances, may be inconsistent with the public interest mission and the primary goals of the Bayh-Dole Act.

The Association of American Universities (AAU) is convening a similar task force during the same time period. Staff from the two associations will work together to coordinate on timelines and outcomes of the separate task forces and keep each other informed about their work. The two organizations agreed on this approach, which recognizes that the two task forces, while perhaps having somewhat different perspectives, will complement each other. APLU's task force will put an emphasis on managing university intellectual property at public institutions and addressing the needs of a broader array of institutions.

The Task Force chairs will be:

- Satish Tripathi, President, University at Buffalo
- Sethuraman "Panch" Panchanathan, Senior Vice President, Knowledge Enterprise Development, Arizona State University

Additional members of the Task Force include:

- Patricia Beeson, Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor, University of Pittsburgh
- Duane Nellis, President, Texas Tech University
- Lita Nelson, Director, Technology Licensing, MIT
- Bill Tucker, Executive Director, Innovation Alliances & Services, University of California Office of the President
- Doug Wasitis, Assistant Vice President, Federal Relations, Indiana University
- Ruth Watkins, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, University of Utah
- Caroline Whitacre, Vice President for Research, The Ohio State University.

Additionally, representatives from AAU and other higher education associations will participate in the work of the Task Force.

The Task Force will prepare some preliminary comments by December, and aims to complete its work early in the spring. Jim Woodell, APLU Assistant Vice President for Innovation and Technology Policy, is staffing the Task Force. Please feel free to contact Jim with any questions (jwoodell@aplu.org; 202-478-6044).

Association of Public and Land-grant Universities

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SUMMARY

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