

Academia and industry: Companies on campus

Over the past three decades, academia and industry have been converging philosophically and physically¹. Thirty-four years ago, the Bayh–Dole Act encouraged US academics to patent their discoveries, work with companies and become entrepreneurs². Policies in Europe have moved in similar directions³. Companies increasingly partner with university scientists to enhance their research. In a 2007 survey of life-sciences faculty members from the 50 US universities that receive the most financial support from US National Institutes of Health, just over half of the respondents reported having some relationship with industry⁴.

Successful academia–industry partnerships require common interests, trust and good communication. For each of these, proximity helps.

Many universities have off-campus research parks, but some academic research facilities have gone a step further and brought small companies within their own walls. BioFrontiers (of which J.J.W.-C. is associate director, and T.R.C. is director) is one of the youngest experiments in 'co-location'. More are set to open soon (see '[Within the same walls](#)'). When it is done well, all parties benefit.

Building buddies

Various university offices connect faculty members, students and companies through technology transfer, industrial partnerships, student internships and mentoring. But these centralized resources do not allow for the spontaneous interactions that can arise from shared excitement about solving a problem. Co-location removes the physical separation and the intermediaries between researchers in academia and those in industry, and so allows serendipitous relationships to bloom.

Read more : <http://www.nature.com/news/academia-and-industry-companies-on-campus-1.16127>