SFU at Surrey

Simon Fraser University (SFU) is delighted to welcome former TechBC faculty and student researchers to our community.

The administration of several major research grants will be moved to SFU as their principal investigators become SFU faculty members. All faculty members located at the Surrey campus will require assistance in applying for research funding, managing the administration of funding awards and, in some cases, commercializing the results of their research. The offices reporting to the Vice-President, Research are working to assure a smooth and orderly transition of all research-related administration.

The services of the Office of Research Services (ORS) are available to assist in application and administration of research grants and contracts from national funding councils, companies and other entities. “We have been working with the various research sponsors who currently support TechBC faculty members to provide the required grant transfer arrangements from TechBC to SFU,” notes ORS Director Ellen Loosley. A part-time Research Services presence at the Surrey campus is being planned to aid the transition process.

The University/Industry Liaison Office (UILO) is also planning to locate a staff resource at the Surrey campus. “During its tenure, TechBC’s UILO undertook several valuable initiatives that are now showing early success,” notes UILO Director Michael Volker. “The SFU UILO will continue to build upon those initiatives and will provide technology transfer services to students, staff and faculty located at the Surrey campus. An integrated and seamless technology transfer service across SFU’s three campuses will result, with UILO programs and funding extended to the entire SFU community.”

Research grants facilitators are available to help the new faculty researchers identify funding opportunities and prepare research proposals. Dr. Bruce Clayman, Vice-President, Research notes, “The grants facilitators have the grant writing and application coordination skills that are crucial to increasing the odds of a successful application for research support. As well as critiquing and editing applications and coordinating submissions, the facilitators also bring researchers together to take advantage of collaborative research opportunities. I encourage our new faculty members to take full advantage of this service.”

The Office of the Vice-President, Research also provides resources and assistance toward the preparation of major funding applications and the administration of major research programs. “I encourage our new faculty members to contact us to discuss their research application and administration needs,” says Dr. Clayman.

For more information contact: Ellen Loosley, Office of Research Services, 604.291.3842, email: loosley@sfu.ca; Mike Volker, University/Industry Liaison Office, 604.291.4984, email: mvolker@sfu.ca.

NSERC eBusiness Update

The objective of NSERC’s eBusiness Project is to use the power of the Web to streamline the application process and thus minimize the administrative burden on researchers, university administrators and peer reviewers.

NSERC’s main priority for the coming twelve-month period is the electronic submission of applications (eSubmission). The eSubmission process will be up and running for the Fall 2002 competitions and will incorporate the following features:

* application management - the ability to register on NSERC’s on-line system, update personal information, and recover a forgotten user name or password;
* on-line collaboration - the ability to grant research collaborators or Grants Facilitators access to electronic applications, browse and print applications, and...
In March, an External Review of the Office of Research Services was undertaken. A consultant with thirty years of experience in research administration was appointed to conduct the review, which consisted of consultations with Research Services and related departments, with faculty members, and with staff from external granting agencies. An open session was held to which all interested parties were invited. The purpose of this external review process was to provide assurances that:

* The unit has clearly stated goals and objectives, with effective means of communicating them to its client community;

* There is a planning process to ensure that the goals and objectives evolve as the environment changes;

* The quality of the unit’s services to its clients is high;

* Its services are delivered in a cost-effective manner;

* The quality of the unit’s interactions with other service units within SFU is high;

* The interaction with other service units within SFU is effective and efficient;

* The interaction with external funders of research is effective and efficient.

The Reviewer, assisted by two internal SFU “guides,” assessed the unit and will comment on its strengths and weaknesses, on opportunities for change and improvement, and on quality and effectiveness of service.

At the time of printing, the review report is in its final stages of drafting. Once that is completed, the draft will be sent to the Office of Research Services for comments and correction of any inaccuracies.

The final report will be posted by the end of May on the website of the Vice-President, Research at www.sfu.ca/vpresearch.

In November 2000, I conducted a study of the transfer of technology from Canadian universities to the private sector called “Technology Transfer at Canadian Universities.” I updated the study in January 2002 and presented the results at the international conference on “Innovation and Commercialization of University Research” (ICUR) that was held in Edmonton in early February.

The study and the update were based mostly on data from the annual Licensing Surveys conducted by the Association of University Technology Managers (AUTM). The FY 2000 data comprises individual entries from 17 Canadian universities and 169 universities in the United States.

The effects of institutional diversity are amply demonstrated by the great variability of the results for most of the measures, even among institutions of similar size and with similar levels of research funding. The institutions are unique, in terms of program mix, size and age, and length of time actively promoting technology transfer, among other attributes.

I attempted to reduce the effects of some of these differences by normalizing the data by Research Expenditures. This involves dividing the indicator - for example, number of Invention Disclosures at a particular institution - by that institution’s Research Expenditures for that period to get Invention Disclosures per dollar of Research Expenditure. Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) President and CEO David Strangway has dubbed this type of measure an aspect of “Commercialization Productivity.”

Among the results of the study are observations that:

1. The amount of technology that is measurably transferred from universities appears to be roughly a linear function of Research Expenditures. This is the case cumulatively for Canadian universities and for U.S. universities. This applies over time, over a wide range of institutional settings and over a very wide range of performance by the individual institutions.

2. The average effectiveness of technology transfer (measured in terms of Commercialization Productivity) of nine of the “G-10” Canadian universities collectively is noticeably lower than it is collectively at the non-G10 universities that responded to the AUTM Surveys. This surprising result suggests that a stronger commitment to technology transfer, evidenced by more resources devoted to the effort, could reap major benefits at those of the G-10 universities that are performing below the average for the country. It is worth noting that a similar disparity does not appear to exist in the U.S. It is a reasonable conjecture that the passage in 1980 of the Bayh-Dole act, which gave all U.S. universities the responsibility for commercializing IP generated in federally funded research, stimulated broadly based activity in universities of all sizes and types.

3. Local conditions, especially an institutional commitment to technology transfer, as evidenced by provision of resources and support for employees dedicated to technology transfer, are a major determinant of the effectiveness of technology transfer. The governments of the provinces of B.C. and Alberta have had long-standing commitments to technology transfer, backed by financial support, and this effect shows clearly in the results for UBC, SFU, Alberta and Calgary. However important commitment by provincial governments is, institutional commitment is critical. For example, the University of Manitoba received no direct provincial support for its UILO in 1999, but its patenting, licensing and income figures are all well above average. Other local conditions, such as the ready availability of venture capital are also important, especially where start-up companies are part of the innovation strategy.

4. No evidence emerged to support the idea that ownership of intellectual property by universities, rather than by the creator of the IP, results in more or...
better technology transfer. My analysis of the AUTM reports shows clearly that the reporting universities that claim ownership of IP do not have a record of more successful exploitation - in fact the opposite may be true.

One concludes from point 1 above that increases to the direct funding of university research via the three federal Granting Agencies, the Canada Foundation for Innovation and other funding agencies, accompanied by payment of the indirect costs of university research, would benefit the Canadian economy through increased production of transferable technologies and the enhanced means to transfer and to commercialize them. The provincial government provided SFU with a $4.9 million one-time grant toward the indirect costs of research in the 2001/2002 budget and the 2001 federal budget took initial steps to support the indirect costs of research by providing a one-time (national) investment of $200 million. This resulted in a one-time grant of $4.4 million to SFU for indirect costs. However it is clear that ongoing support is needed to increase the commercialization productivity of Canadian universities, as described in the Federal government’s consultation paper on “Innovation” that was released in mid-February. The Vice-President, Research will continue to press for continuation of this support.

**SFU’s Performance**

The normalized results of my study (all measured per $1 million research expenditures) reveal that SFU received the highest number of technology disclosures and formed the most start-up companies. In terms of license agreements executed and license income, SFU performed at the average of the group, and we reported the third highest number of US patents issued. SFU’s long-standing commitment to knowledge transfer via our University/Industry Liaison Office (UILO) is clearly a major factor in our successes. The major support for the UILO has come from the federal and provincial governments and from revenue generated through our Discovery Park. Under the leadership of Director Mike Volker and his dedicated, hard-working staff, our record of knowledge transfer has been exemplary.

My studies based on the FY1999 and FY2000 AUTM data are available at www.sfu.ca/vpresearch/vprreports.htm as are bar charts that I used in my presentation at the ICUR Conference.

**Director of Research Ethics**

Effective April 2, 2002, Dr. Hal Weinberg began his appointment in the position of Director of the Office of Research Ethics (DORE). This appointment culminated a national search process, guided by the SFU Research Ethics Board.

Dr. Weinberg is Professor Emeritus of the School of Kinesiology and has a long, distinguished record of research accomplishments and public service. Most recently he has served as SFU’s Research Ethics Consultant and as Acting DORE.

“I am delighted that Dr. Weinberg has accepted this position,” said Dr. Bruce Clayman, Vice-President, Research. “Dr. Weinberg’s expertise, experience and interpersonal communication skills make him ideally suited to address successfully the tasks that await the Director, as we move to implement fully the revised SFU ethics policy.”

Dr. Weinberg can be reached at 604.291.6593 or by email to hal_weinberg@sfu.ca. His office is in Strand Hall, Room 2104.
Upcoming deadlines, Summer 2002

**JUNE**

**NSERC: E.W.R. Steacie Fellowships**

www.nserc.ca/about/award_nomin_e.htm

NSERC awards Steacie Fellowships to outstanding scientists and engineers who, though still in the early stages of their careers, already enjoy a reputation for original research.

The Fellowship normally includes a contribution to the university in the amount of $90,000 per year toward the Fellow’s salary, the replacement of teaching and administrative responsibilities, or the enhancement of the research environment of the Fellow’s department. However, should the recipient of the Fellowship be the holder of another federal award that has a salary component, for example, Canada Research Chairs (CRC), University Faculty Awards (UFA), or Industrial Research Chairs (IRC), NSERC will contribute only $30,000 per year to the university for teaching release for the Fellow.

The Vice-President, Research provides a letter endorsing the nomination. SFU’s internal deadline is Monday, June 24, 2002. The annual NSERC deadline is July 1, 2002.

**JULY**

**NSERC: Collaborative Research Opportunities Grant (CRO)**

www.nserc.ca/guide/e1_e.htm

New Letter of Intent Form 182 is required. This form can be accessed through the “Forms” link on the NSERC web site. CRO grants support participation of teams in major international or interdisciplinary research projects that present a special opportunity for collaboration. CROs normally require in excess of $100,000 annually from NSERC. The duration is determined by the nature of the project. There will only be one CRO competition in 2002 instead of the usual two. LOI must be received by July 1, 2002.

**Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCEs)**

www.nce.gc.ca

Call for Proposals for 2003 Competition: Letters of Intent are to be submitted by July 12, 2002 to establish new NCEs. In October 2002, selected applicants will be invited to submit full applications for a deadline of March 7, 2003. SFU faculty who are involved as participants in letters of intent must indicate such using an SFU Funding Application Signature Sheet. The proposed budget at SFU may be estimated at this early stage.

**Research Development Initiatives (RDI)**

www.sshrc.ca/english/programinfo/grantsguide/rdi.htm

RDI application form and instructions are available on the SSHRC Web site. RDI support short term, stand-alone projects or discrete components of longer-term, recurring activities but not ongoing research programs. The average request range is $10,000 to $25,000 with a maximum of $50,000 in one year or a maximum of $150,000 over 3 years. Intended to support innovative research and dissemination activities, such as intellectual exchanges, critical analysis, new modes of research collaboration, new ways of producing and structuring knowledge, as well as knowledge transfer and integration at the national and international levels. Deadlines: July 15, 2002 and October 31, 2002.

**AUGUST**

**NSERC: Notification of Intent to Apply for a Research Grant**

www.nserc.ca/guide/a1_e.htm

NSERC’s deadline to submit Form 180 is August 15, 2002.

**CIHR: Registration procedures for the Fall competition**

www.cihr.gc.ca/services/funding/apply/index_e.shtml

CIHR’s registration deadline is August 15, 2002.