

OPINION

FSU VP: Growth of Florida State research benefits region, state | Opinion

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Many Tallahassee residents experience Florida State through football weekends, performances at Ruby Diamond Concert Hall or perhaps the open house at the National High Magnetic Field Laboratory.

They don't often get a firsthand look at the immense amount of research and creative activity that occurs on our campus. The effects of this research, however, ripple throughout our community and state.

This past fiscal year, Florida State University researchers attracted \$233.6 million in research funding from federal, state and private sources. This includes money to research cardiovascular disease, climate change, the local oyster population and so much more.

This research could change lives, but it is also worth noting that the dollars used to support these endeavors have a profound effect on our area.

These funds support salaries of faculty, staff and graduate students who buy homes in Tallahassee, shop in local stores and dine out. These dollars are funding researchers who will create next-generation technologies and health solutions for the marketplace.

ADVERTISING

Over the past few years, FSU has consistently been among the top patent producers in the world, according to the National Academy of Inventors and Intellectual Property Owners Association. This past year, we ranked No. 69 among all universities in the world for the number of patents granted, up from No. 79 the year prior.

What's even more valuable is when we can turn these patents into viable business opportunities through licensing agreements or startup companies. In the past few years, the university has licensed about 10 new technologies per year to companies.

One of these technologies is a next-generation foam developed by Chad Zeng, a researcher at FSU's High-Performance Materials Institute. The foam was the product of a two-year project funded by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, which was interested in creating more comfortable prosthetics. It also turned out to have some commercial applications because it has the novel property of expanding on impact.

This foam was licensed by a Florida-based company called Auxadyne, which has been using the foam to make safer athletic equipment, including better football helmets. The company was recently recognized by the National Football League's health and safety initiative.

Another example is the work conducted by Professor Michael Blaber at the FSU College of Medicine. Blaber, with the help of funding from the National Institutes of Health, has developed an artificial human protein for stimulating cell growth that could help provide relief for an incurable eye condition called Fuchs' Dystrophy. This technology has been licensed by Trefoil Therapeutics, a biopharmaceutical company that has attracted significant investment from venture capitalist firms and recently received \$28 million from investors.

We have extraordinary researchers at FSU working on so many different types of projects, and we are beginning to see the fruits of their labors reflected in the federal, state and private grants received this past fiscal year. But that is only the start of their stories here at FSU.

In the next few years, we will see what they will develop to help solve questions in health, technology, the environment and other areas. And we will also see how those innovations can make a dent in the marketplace, bringing greater benefits to the Big Bend Region and the state of Florida.

Gary Ostrander is the vice-president for research for Florida State University.