An Inventor’s Guide to Innovations Commercialization at Old Dominion University
The Inventor’s Guide to Innovations Commercialization outlines the essential elements of technology transfer process at Old Dominion University.

This guide is organized to answer the most common questions we typically field from our research community and provides a broad overview of the Innovations Commercialization process and services available for researchers.

Contact Us

odu.edu/facultystaff/research/innovations-commercialization

757-683-4027
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This guide was modified and reprinted with permission from the University of Michigan Tech Transfer’s “An Inventor’s Guide to Technology Transfer.” We would like to thank the University of Michigan for allowing ODU to share large sections of its guide.
What is technology transfer?

Technology transfer is the transfer of knowledge and discoveries to the public. It can occur through publications, educated students entering the workforce, exchanges at conferences, and relationships with industry, among other things.

For the purposes of this guide, technology transfer refers to the formal licensing of technology to third parties under the guidance of professionals employed by universities, research foundations, and businesses. For the purposes of this guide, technology transfer refers to the formal licensing of technology to third parties under the guidance of professionals employed by universities, research foundations, and businesses.

What is ODU Innovations Commercialization?

ODU Innovations Commercialization is a University service unit composed of specialists in licensing, business development, and legal matters, whom are experienced in transferring technologies from the physical sciences, life sciences, and information and computer sciences. We are responsible for managing invention disclosures from all schools of ODU.

Why would a researcher want to participate in the technology transfer process?

The reasons are unique to each researcher and may include:
- Making a positive impact on society
- Feeling a sense of personal fulfillment
- Achieving recognition and financial rewards
- Generating additional lab/departmental funding
- Meeting the obligations of a research contract
- Attracting research sponsors
- Creating educational opportunities for students
- Linking students to future job opportunities
**How is Technology Transferred?**

Technology is typically transferred through a license agreement in which the University grants its rights in the defined technology to a third party for a period of years, often limited to a particular field of use and/or region of the world. The licensee (the third party licensing the technology) may be an established company or a new business start-up. Licenses include terms that require the licensee to meet certain performance requirements and to make financial payments to the University. These payments are shared with the inventors and are also distributed to the schools/colleges, departments/units, and central administration to provide support for further research, education, and participation in the Innovations Commercialization process.

**What is the Bayh-Dole Act?**

The U.S. Bayh-Dole Act of 1980 allows universities and other non-profit institutions to have ownership rights to discoveries resulting from federally funded research, provided certain obligations are met. These obligations include making efforts to protect (when appropriate) and commercialize the discoveries, submitting progress reports to the funding agency, giving preference to small businesses that demonstrate sufficient capability, and sharing any resulting revenues with the inventors. The Bayh-Dole Act is credited with stimulating interest in Innovations Commercialization activities and generating increased research, commercialization, educational opportunities, and economic development in the United States.

*Throughout this manual, unless specifically described otherwise, the term inventor includes individuals listed on a patent as well as contributors who have shared in creating the value of intellectual property that is not patented.*
How do I work with ODU’s Innovations Commercialization?

We encourage you to contact ODU Innovations Commercialization during your early research activities to be aware of the options that will best leverage the commercial potential of your research. Innovations Commercialization staff are trained to assist you with questions related to marketability, funding sources, commercial partners, patenting and other protection methods, new business start-up considerations, University policies and procedures, and much more. Our team approach provides you with an assigned licensing specialist supported by internal legal assistance, and, if a new business start-up is being considered, a new business development specialist as well.

What are the typical steps in the process?

The process of technology transfer is summarized in the steps and diagram that follow. Note that these steps can vary in sequence and often occur simultaneously.

(1) Research:
Observations and experiments during research activities often lead to discoveries and inventions. An invention is any useful process, machine, composition of matter, or any new or useful improvement of the same. Often, multiple researchers may have contributed to the invention.

(2) Pre-Disclosure:
An early contact with ODU Innovations Commercialization personnel to discuss your invention and to provide guidance with respect to the disclosure, evaluation, and protection processes described below.

(3) Invention Disclosure:
The written notice of invention to ODU Innovations Commercialization that begins the formal technology transfer process. An invention disclosure remains a confidential document and should fully document your invention so that the options for commercialization can be evaluated and pursued.

(4) Assessment:
The period in which you and your ODU Innovations Commercialization representative review the invention disclosure, conduct patent searches (if applicable), and analyze the market and competitive technologies to determine the invention’s commercialization potential. This evaluation process, which may lead to a broadening or refinement of the invention, will guide our strategy on whether to focus on licensing to an existing company or creating a new business start-up.

(5) Protection:
The process in which protection for an invention is pursued. Patent protection, a common legal protection method, begins with the filing of a patent application with the U.S. Patent Office and, (continued on the next page)
when appropriate, foreign patent offices. Once a patent application has been filed, it typically will require several years and tens of thousands of dollars to obtain issued U.S. and foreign patents. Other protection methods include copyright, trademark, trade secrets, and contractual use restrictions (e.g., for databases and materials).

(6) Marketing:
With your active involvement, ODU Innovations Commercialization staff identify candidate companies that have the expertise, resources, and business networks to bring the technology to market. This may involve partnering with an existing company or forming a start-up. Your active involvement can dramatically shorten this process.

(7a) Form a Start-Up:
If creation of a new business start-up has been chosen as the optimal commercialization path, ODU Innovations Commercialization business development specialists will work as business formation consultants to assist in planning, forming, and funding the start-up.

(7b) Existing Business:
If an appropriate and interested existing company, or companies, are selected as a potential licensee, ODU Innovations Commercialization licensing specialists work with those potential licensees to develop the appropriate financial and diligence terms to fully commercialize the technology.

(8) Licensing:
A license agreement is a contract between the University and a third party in which the University’s rights to a technology are licensed, without relinquishing ownership, for financial and other benefits. A license agreement is used with both a new start-up business or with an established company. An option agreement is sometimes used to enable a third party to evaluate the technology for a limited time prior to making a decision about licensing.

(9) Commercialization
The licensee continues the advancement of the technology and makes other business investments to develop the product or service. This step may entail further development, regulatory approvals, sales and marketing support, training, and other activities.

(10) Revenue
Revenues received by the University from licenses are distributed to schools, colleges, departments, units, central administration, and inventors to fund additional research and education and to encourage further participation in the Innovations Commercialization process.

**How long does the Innovations Commercialization process take?**
The process of protecting the technology and finding the right licensing partner may take months—or even years—to complete. The amount of time will depend on the development stage of the technology, the market for the technology, competing technologies, the amount of work needed to bring a new concept to market-ready status, and the resources and willingness of the licensees and the inventors.
How can I help in this process?

• Call ODU Innovations Commercialization at 757-683-4027 when you believe you have created or discovered something unique with potential commercial or research value.

• Complete and submit the ODU Disclosure Form (see: www.odu.edu/researchoffice) before publicly disclosing your technology or submitting a manuscript for review and publication.

• To avoid risking your patent rights and possibly hindering the opportunity to market your invention, contact ODU Innovations Commercialization before holding any discussions with people outside the ODU community.

• To avoid losing your patent rights, contact ODU Innovations Commercialization before submitting grant applications to any outside public or private funding agencies.

• On the ODU Disclosure Form, include companies and contacts you believe might be interested in your invention or who may have already contacted you about your invention. Studies have shown that over 70% of all licenses are executed with commercial entities known by the inventor, so your contacts can be extremely useful.

• Respond to ODU Innovations Commercialization and outside patent counsel requests. While some aspects of the patent and licensing process may require significant participation on your part, we will strive to make efficient use of your valuable time.

• Keep ODU Innovations Commercialization informed of upcoming publications or interactions with companies related to your intellectual property.
**Will I be Able to publish the results of my research and still protect the commercial value of my intellectual property?**

Yes, but since patent rights are affected by these activities, it is best to submit an Invention Disclosure (discussed in next section) well before communicating or disclosing your invention to people outside the ODU community. There are significant differences between the U.S. and other countries as to how early publication affects a potential patent. Once publicly disclosed (published or presented in some form), an invention may have restricted or minimal potential for patent protection outside of the United States. Be sure to inform the licensing specialist assigned to you of any imminent or prior presentation, lecture, poster, abstract, website description, research proposal submission, dissertation/masters thesis, publication, or other public presentation including the invention.

**May I use material or intellectual property from others in my research?**

Yes, but it is important to document carefully the date and conditions of use so that we can determine if this use may influence the ownership and license rights of your subsequent research results. If you wish to obtain materials from outside collaborators, an incoming Material Transfer Agreement (MTA) should be completed.

**Will I be able to share materials, research tools or intellectual property with others to further their research?**

Yes. However it is important to document items that are to be shared with others and the conditions of use. If you wish to send materials to an outside collaborator, an outgoing MTA should be completed for this purpose. It also may be necessary to have a Confidentiality Agreement completed to protect your research results or intellectual property. Contact ODU Innovations Commercialization representative at 757-683-4027 to assist you in completing outgoing MTAs or Confidentiality Agreements.

**What rights does a research sponsor have to any discoveries associated with my research?**

The Sponsored Research Agreement should specify the intellectual property (IP) rights of the sponsor. The University generally retains ownership of the patent rights and other intellectual property resulting from sponsored research. However, the sponsor may have rights to obtain a license to the defined and expected outcomes of the research. *(continued on the next page)*
Often, sponsored research contracts allow the sponsor a limited time to negotiate a license for any patent or intellectual property rights developed as the result of the research. Even so, the sponsor generally will not have contractual rights to discoveries that are clearly outside of the scope of the research. Therefore, it is important to define the scope of work within a research agreement.

Sponsored research projects are handled by Old Dominion University Research Foundation (ODURF). Project representatives from ODURF work closely with ODU Innovations Commercialization on IP issues in sponsored research agreements. If you have questions about sponsored research, please contact the ODURF project representative responsible for the sponsor.

For more information on the ODU Research Foundation, visit researchfoundation.odu.edu or call 757-683-4293.

What About Consulting?

When researchers enter into consulting agreements, they are deemed to be acting outside of the scope of their employment. Therefore consulting arrangements are not negotiated by the University nor formally reviewed by ODU Innovations Commercialization or ODURF. Researchers who enter into consulting agreements should familiarize themselves with the policies of their school or college relevant to consulting activities. The researcher is expected to ensure that the terms of the consulting arrangement are consistent with University policies, including those related to IP ownership, employment responsibilities and use of Intellectual Property. ODU Innovations Commercialization is available to provide informal advice on how your consulting agreement relates to your ODU’s Intellectual Property.

A discussion regarding consulting and conflict of interest may be found online: www.odu.edu/content/dam/odu/policies/university/5000/univ-5201.pdf
**Invention Disclosures**

**What is an Invention Disclosure?**

An Invention Disclosure (ID) is a written description of your invention or development that is provided to ODU Innovations Commercialization. The ID should list all collaborating sources of support and include all of the information necessary to begin pursuing protection, marketing, and commercialization activities.

This document will be treated as “University Confidential.” Based on the Invention Disclosure, ODU Innovations Commercialization may generate a non-confidential description of your invention in order to assist in marketing the technology. Once potential partners have been identified, and confidentiality agreements have been signed, more detailed exchanges of information can be made.

**Why should I submit an Invention Disclosure?**

When you disclose your invention to ODU Innovations Commercialization, it starts a process that could lead to the commercialization of your technology. This may involve beginning the legal protection process and working to identify outside development partners. If government funds were used for your research, you are required to file a prompt disclosure, which will be reported to the sponsoring agency. Similar requirements may exist for other sponsored projects.

**How do I know if my discovery is an invention?**

You are encouraged to submit an Invention Disclosure for all inventions and developments that you feel may solve a significant problem and/or have significant value. If you are in doubt, contact ODU Innovations Commercialization to discuss the invention and strategies for commercialization.

**When should I complete an Invention Disclosure?**

You should complete an Invention Disclosure whenever you feel you have discovered something unique with possible commercial value. This should be done well before presenting the discovery through publications, poster sessions, conferences, press releases, or other communications. Once publicly disclosed (i.e., published or presented in some form), an invention may have restricted or minimal potential for patent protection outside of the United States. Differences exist between the U.S. and other countries on the impact of early publication on a potential patent. Be sure to inform ODU Innovations Commercialization of any imminent or prior presentation, lecture, poster, abstract, website description, research proposal, dissertation/masters thesis, publication, or other public presentation including the invention.
**Should I disclose Research Tools?**

Yes, if your new tools would benefit other researchers and you are interested in providing them to those researchers and other third parties. Typically, research tools are materials such as antibodies, vectors, plasmids, cell lines, mice, and other materials used as “tools” in the research process. Most research tools do not necessarily need to be protected by patents in order to be licensed to commercial third parties and/or generate revenue for your laboratory. If you have research tools that you believe to be valuable, or wish to provide to others (including research collaborators), ODU Innovations Commercialization will work with you to develop the appropriate protection, licensing, and distribution strategy.

**How do I submit an Invention Disclosure?**

You can download a disclosure form and simple instructions from: [http://www.odu.edu/faculty/staff/research/innovations-commercialization](http://www.odu.edu/faculty/staff/research/innovations-commercialization). Invention Disclosures are assigned weekly to an ODU Innovations Commercialization licensing specialist. If your invention is all or in part associated with a software, please the use Software Supplemental Form together with your invention disclosure form. If you have any questions, call ODU Innovations Commercialization at 757-683-4027.
**Ownership of Intellectual Property**

**What is “Intellectual Property?”**

Intellectual property is inventions and/or material that may be protected under the patent, trademark and/or copyright laws, and sometimes by contract.

**Who owns what I create?**

Ownership depends upon the employment status of the creators of the invention and their use of University facilities.

**Considerations include:**

- What is the source of the funds or resources used to produce the invention?
- What was the employment status of the creators at the time the intellectual property was made?
- What are the terms of any agreement related to the creation of the intellectual property?

As a general rule, the University owns inventions made by its employees while acting within the scope of their employment or using University resources. The University’s copyright policy describes the applicable rules for copyrightable works: [https://www.odu.edu/content/dam/odu/offices/bov/policies/1400/bov1424.pdf](https://www.odu.edu/content/dam/odu/offices/bov/policies/1400/bov1424.pdf). In some cases, the terms of a Sponsored Research Agreement or Materials Transfer Agreement may impact ownership. When in doubt, it is best to call the ODU Innovations Commercialization office for advice.

**What is ODU policy on ownership of inventions?**

The policy could be found on: [https://www.odu.edu/content/dam/odu/offices/bov/policies/1400/bov1424.pdf](https://www.odu.edu/content/dam/odu/offices/bov/policies/1400/bov1424.pdf)

**Who owns rights to discoveries made while I am consulting?**

The ownership of inventions made while consulting for an outside company depends on the terms of your consulting contract. It is important to clearly define the scope of work within consulting contracts to minimize any issues with ownership of inventions created from University research. If you have questions, ODU Innovations Commercialization is available for informal advice.

**Who owns rights to discoveries made while on sabbatical?**

Generally, if you are on a sabbatical paid by the University, the ODU still retains rights to any discoveries connected to your scope of employment. Contact ODU Innovations Commercialization or ODURF before your sabbatical to ensure that ownership considerations are documented.
Should I list visiting scientists or scientists at other institutions on my Invention Disclosure?

All contributors to the ideas leading to a discovery should be mentioned in your disclosure, even if they are not ODU employees. ODU Innovations Commercialization, along with legal counsel, will determine the rights of such persons and institutions. It is prudent to discuss with ODU Innovations Commercialization all working relationships (preferably before they begin) to understand the implications for any subsequent inventions.

Can a student contribute to an invention?

Yes, many students work on inventions at ODU under a wide variety of circumstances. ODU promotes student entrepreneurship, and students can be named as Inventors under ODU’s IP Policy. Typically, a student will own his or her rights to an invention unless the student was employed by ODU during the time of invention, the invention was created as part of a sponsored research project, the invention was conceived by an ODU faculty or staff member, or the invention was made by using significant resources at ODU. An invention disclosure form for such students, whom need a waiver of rights from ODU, could be downloaded from: http://www.odu.edu/facultystaff/research/innovations-commercialization.

If you have any questions, call ODU Innovations Commercialization at 757-683-4027.

Can a student license his/her own inventions stemming from significant use of ODU’s resources?

Yes, ODU Innovations Commercialization offers exclusive licenses to students, whom used significant resources of ODU at very attractive terms. Please call ODU Innovations Commercialization for more details at 757-683-4027.
How does ODU assess Invention Disclosures?
Licensing Specialists at ODU Innovations Commercialization examine each invention disclosure to review the novelty of the invention, protectability and market-ability of potential products or services, relationship to related intellectual property, size and growth potential of the relevant market, amount of time and money required for further development, pre-existing rights associated with the intellectual property (IP), and potential competition from other products/technologies. This assessment may also include consideration of whether the intellectual property can be the basis for a new business start-up.

If the inventors believe that all IP should be licensed non-exclusively to all potential users for the public good, will the University honor our request?
ODU Innovations Commercialization will work with you to develop the appropriate commercialization strategy for the invention. Some technologies lend themselves to non-exclusive licensing (licensing to multiple third parties), while others will only reach the commercial marketplace, and therefore the public, if they are licensed on an exclusive basis. We will try to accommodate inventors’ commercialization wishes. However, the final decision will be determined by our assessment of which strategy will produce the most benefits for the general public, consistent with governmental or institutional policies and other obligations.

How do we decide whether to commercialize with a traditional or an “open source” license for software?
Generally, ODU Innovations Commercialization supports University software developers who choose to essentially give their programs away through open source mechanisms, provided the University retains the right to distribute the program freely, that open sourcing is consistent with obligations to sponsors, and that each developer’s unit supports the decision. Developers should seek authorization from an appropriate department chair or dean.

Is an invention ever assigned to an Inventor?
If ODU Innovations Commercialization decides not to pursue patent protection and/or chooses not to actively market the invention, the University may transfer ownership to the inventor(s). Reassignment of inventions funded from U.S. government sources requires the government’s prior approval. Among the key factors in deciding to reassign are whether additional University resources or private resources could best improve marketability. Find further information: https://www.odu.edu/content/dam/odu/offices/bov/policies/1400/bov1424.pdf
**What is a patent?**

In the U.S., a patent gives the holder the right to exclude others from making, using, selling, offering to sell, and importing the patented invention. A patent does not necessarily provide the holder any affirmative right to practice a technology since it may fall under a broader patent owned by others. Instead, it provides the right to exclude others from practicing the invention. Patent claims are the legal definition of an inventor’s protectable invention.

**What type of subject matter can be patented?**

Patentable subject matter includes processes, machines, compositions of matter, articles, some computer programs, and methods (including methods of making compositions, methods of making articles, and even methods of performing business).

**Can someone patent a naturally occurring substance?**

Generally, no. A natural substance that has never before been isolated or known may be patentable in some limited cases. A variation of a naturally occurring substance may be patentable if an inventor is able to demonstrate substantial non-obvious modifications that offer advantages of using the variant.

**What is the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO)?**

The USPTO is the federal agency, organized under the Department of Commerce, that administers patents on behalf of the government. The USPTO employs patent examiners skilled in all technical fields in order to appraise patent applications. The USPTO also issues federal trademark registrations.

**What is the definition of an inventor on a patent and who determines this?**

Under U.S. law, an inventor is a person who takes part in the conception of the ideas in the patent claims of a patent application. Thus, inventorship of a patent application may change as the patent claims are changed during prosecution of the application. An employer or person who only furnishes money to build or practice an invention is not an inventor. Inventorship is a legal issue and may require an intricate legal determination by the patent attorney prosecuting the application.

**Who is responsible for patenting?**

ODU Innovations Commercialization contracts with outside patent counsel (continued on the next page)
for IP protection, thus assuring access to patent specialists in diverse technology areas. Inventors work with the patent counsel in drafting the patent applications and responses to worldwide patent offices. ODU licensing specialists and in-house attorneys will help with the selection and oversight of the outside patent counsel.

**What is the patenting process?**

Patent applications are generally drafted by a patent attorney or a patent agent (a non-attorney with a science education licensed to practice by the USPTO). The patent attorney generally will ask you to review an application before it is filed and will also ask you questions about inventorship of the application claims. At the time an application is filed, the patent attorney will ask the inventor(s) to sign an Inventor’s Declaration and an Assignment, which evidences the inventor’s duty to assign the patent to the University.

In about one year or longer, depending on the technology, the patent attorney will receive written notice from the USPTO as to whether the application and its claims have been accepted in the form as filed. More often than not, the USPTO rejects the application because either certain formalities need to be cleared up, or the claims are not patentable over the “prior art” (anything that workers in the field have made or publicly disclosed in the past). The letter sent by the USPTO is referred to as an Office Action or Official Action.

If the application is rejected, the patent attorney must file a written response, usually within three to six months. Generally the attorney may amend the claims and/or point out why the USPTO’s position is incorrect. This procedure is referred to as patent prosecution. Often it will take two USPTO Official Actions and two responses by the patent attorney—and sometimes more—before the application is resolved. The resolution can take the form of a USPTO notice that the application is allowable; in other words, the USPTO agrees to issue a patent. During this process, input from the inventor(s) is often needed to confirm patent attorney’s understanding of the technical aspects of invention and/or prior arts cited against the application. The USPTO holds patent applications confidential until published by the USPTO, 18 months after initial filing.

**Is there such a thing as a provisional patent?**

No. However, there is a provisional patent application, which is described below.

**What is the difference between a provisional patent application and a regular (or “utility”) patent application?**

In certain circumstances, U.S. provisional patent applications can provide a tool for preserving patent rights while temporarily reducing costs.
This occurs because the application is not examined during the year in which it is pending and claims are not required. A regular U.S. application and related foreign applications must be filed within one year of the provisional form in order to receive its early filing date. However, an applicant only receives the benefit of the earlier filing date for material that is adequately described and enabled in the provisional application. As a result, the patent attorney may need your assistance when an application is filed as a provisional.

**What’s different about foreign patent protection?**

Foreign patent protection is subject to the laws of each individual country, although in a general sense the process works much the same as it does in the United States. In foreign countries, however, an inventor will lose any patent rights if he or she publicly discloses the invention prior to filing the patent application. In contrast, the United States has a one-year grace period.

**Is there such a thing as an international patent?**

Although an international patent does not exist, an international agreement known as the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) provides a streamlined filing procedure for most industrialized nations. For U.S. applicants, a PCT application is generally filed one year after the corresponding U.S. application (either provisional or regular) has been submitted. The PCT application must later be filed in the national patent office of any country in which the applicant wishes to seek patent protection, generally within 30 months of the earliest claimed filing date.

**The PCT provides two advantages:**

First, it delays the need to file costly foreign applications until the 30-month date, often after an applicant has the opportunity to further develop, evaluate and/or market the invention for licensing. Second, the international preliminary examination often allows an applicant to simplify the patent prosecution process by having a single examiner speak to the patentability of the claims, which can save significant costs in prosecuting foreign patent applications.

An important international treaty called the Paris Convention permits a patent application filed in a second country (or a PCT application) to claim the benefit of the filing date of an application filed in a first country. However, pursuant to this treaty, these so-called “convention applications” must be filed in foreign countries (or as a PCT) within one year of the first filing date of the U.S. application.

**What is the timeline of the patenting process and resulting protection?**

Currently, the average U.S. utility patent application is pending for about two years, though inventors in the biotech and computer fields should plan on a longer waiting period. Once a patent is issued, it is enforceable for 20 years from the initial filing of the application that resulted in the patent, assuming that PTO-mandated maintenance fees are paid.
**Will the University initiate or continue patenting activity without an identified licensee?**

In most cases, ODU would file a provisional application for one or two years depending on date of inventors' public disclosure. During such time, uncertainties described above are assessed and licensee(s) are diligently pursued. If rights to technology are licensed, the licensee generally pays patenting expenses. If no licensee is found or it was determined that commercialization/protection uncertainties are high, we must decline further IP protection.

**What is a copyright and how is it useful?**

Copyright is a form of protection provided by the laws of the United States to the authors of “original works of authorship.” This includes literary, dramatic, musical, artistic, and certain other intellectual works as well as computer software. This protection is available to both published and unpublished works. The Copyright Act generally gives the owner of copyright the exclusive right to conduct and authorize various acts, including reproduction, public performance and making derivative works. Copyright protection is automatically secured when a work is fixed into a tangible medium such as a book, software code, video, etc. It is not necessary to register a copyright to prevent others from infringing upon it. In some instances, ODU registers copyrights, but generally not until a commercial product is ready for manufacture.

**What is a derivative work?**

A “derivative work” is a work based upon one or more preexisting works, such as a translation, musical arrangement, dramatization, fictionalization, motion picture version, sound recording, art reproduction, abridgment, condensation, or any other form in which a work may be recast, transformed or adapted. A work consisting of editorial revisions, annotations, elaborations, or other modifications, which, as a whole, represent an original work of authorship, is a “derivative work.” The owner of a copyright generally has the exclusive right to create derivative works.

**How do I give proper notice of an ODU copyright?**

Although copyrightable works do not require a copyright notice, we recommend that you use one. For works owned by ODU, use the following template: [Year of first publication] © Old Dominion University (e.g., 2014 © Old Dominion University).

**How can I learn more about ODU’s copyright?**

If you have additional questions about a potentially copyrightable invention, please contact ODU Innovations Commercialization.
What is a trademark or service mark and how is it useful?

A trademark includes any word, name, symbol, device, or combination, that is used in commerce to identify and distinguish the goods of one manufacturer or seller from those manufactured or sold by others, and also to indicate the source of the goods. In short, a trademark is a brand name. A service mark is any word, name, symbol, device, or combination that is used, or intended to be used, in commerce to identify and distinguish the services of one provider from those of others, and to indicate the source of the services.

What is trademark registration?

Trademark registration is a procedure in which the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) provides a determination of rights based upon legitimate use of the mark. However, it is not necessary to register a trademark or service mark to prevent others from infringing upon the trademark. Trademarks generally become protected as soon as they are adopted by an organization and used in commerce, even before registration. With a federal trademark registration, the registrant is presumed to be entitled to use the trademark throughout the United States for the goods or services for which the trademark is registered.
What is a start-up company and why choose to create one?

A start-up is a new business entity formed by ODU’s faculty to commercialize one or more related inventions. Forming a start-up company is an alternative to licensing the IP to an established business. Standard requirements in a license for an ODU startup include minor financial terms, such as a royalty on product sales (depending on exclusivity of license), reimbursement of patent costs, a dilutable equity, and a small non-dilutable equity upon a liquidity event. Licensing for a faculty startup also include diligence requirements; assuring pursuit of technology development, and clauses reserving rights for research sponsors and for ODU’s educational purposes.

Who decides whether to form a start-up?

The choice to establish a new company for commercializing IP is a joint decision made by ODU Innovations Commercialization and the inventors or students. If a new business start-up is chosen as the preferred commercialization path, ODU Innovations Commercialization will assist you in obtaining a license to ODU’s rights.

What role does an inventor usually play in a company?

ODU faculty typically serve as technology consultants, advisors or in some other technical developmental capacity. Rarely do faculty choose to leave the University and join the start-up. In many cases, the faculty role is suggested by the start-up investors and management team who identify the best role based on the inventor’s expertise and interests. As the company matures, and additional investment is required, the inventor’s role may change. Faculty involvement of any kind in a start-up is also reviewed by ODU’s Conflict of Interest Committee.

Can ODU accept equity in the company?

Yes. ODU accepts equity as part of the financial terms of licensing ODU’s rights as a substitution for other cash considerations, which could be difficult for start-ups. It is also a way for the University to share some of the risks associated with start-ups. A decision to take equity must make sense for both the University and faculty’s company. Inventors, whom are interested in starting their own companies, should contact ODU Innovations Commercialization to discuss licensing options.

Will ODU pay for incorporating a start-up company?

No. As a separate entity, the start-up should pay for its own legal matters, including all business incorporation matters.
Will ODU pay for IP expenses for the start-up?

No. The start-up should pay for all its licensed IP expenses. The start-up may choose to have its own IP counsel; however, start-up’s counsel must be separate from ODU’s IP counsel, though it is advisable and recommended that start-up and ODU’s IP counsels coordinate activities. Also, it is wise for inventors to have agreements regarding their roles with the start-up reviewed by their own counsel to ensure that all personal ramifications—including taxation and liabilities—are clearly understood.

Will ODU assign the patent to the start-up?

No. If the license is an exclusive one, most of the rights to the IP would satisfy start-up’s needs.

Will ODU give a license before a start-up is incorporated?

No. An option agreement could be arranged to preserve the license until incorporation.

Will research on the licensed technology be allowed to continue in ODU by an inventor-licensee?

Only for research purposes. Inventor(s)-licensee(s) are not allowed to continue to develop licensed technology at ODU for the benefit of their start-ups.
**How does ODU Innovations Commercialization market my inventions?**

Licensing specialists use many sources and strategies to identify potential licensees and market inventions. Sometimes existing relationships of the inventors, the Innovations Commercialization staff, and other researchers are useful in marketing an invention. Market research can assist in identifying prospective licensees. We also examine other complementary technologies and agreements to assist our efforts. We use our website to post inventions, leverage conferences and industry events, and make direct contacts. Faculty publications and presentations are often excellent marketing tools as well.

**How are most licensees found?**

Studies have shown that 70% of licensees were already known to the inventors. Thus research and consulting relationships are often a valuable source for licensees. Licensees are also identified through existing relationships of the Innovations Commercialization staff. Our licensees often license more than one technology from the University. We attempt to broaden these relationships through contacts obtained from website posting inquiries, market research, industry events and the cultivation of existing licensing relationships.

**How long does it take to find a potential licensee?**

It can take months and sometimes years to locate a potential licensee, depending on the attractiveness of the invention, its stage of development, competing technologies, and the size and intensity of the market. Most university inventions tend to be in the early stage in the development cycle and thus require substantial commercialization investment, making it difficult to attract a licensee.

**How can I assist in marketing my invention?**

Your active involvement can dramatically improve the chances of matching an invention to an outside company. Your research and consulting relationships are often helpful in both identifying potential licensees and technology champions within companies. Once interested companies are identified, the inventor is the best person to describe details of an invention and its technical advantages. The most successful Innovations Commercialization results are obtained when inventor(s) and licensing professional(s) work together as a team to market and sell technologies.

**Can there be more than one licensee?**

Yes, an invention can be licensed to multiple licensees, either non-exclusively to several companies or exclusively to several companies, each for a unique field-of-use (application) or geography.
**What is a license?**

A license is a permission that the owner or controller of intellectual property grants to another party, usually under a license agreement.

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**What is a license agreement?**

License agreements describe the rights and responsibilities related to the use and exploitation of intellectual property developed at the University. University license agreements usually stipulate that the licensee should diligently seek to bring the intellectual property into commercial use for the public good and provide a reasonable return to the University.

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**How is a company chosen to be a licensee?**

A licensee is chosen based on its ability to commercialize a technology for the benefit of general public. Sometimes an established company with experience in similar technologies and markets is the best choice. In other cases, the focus and intensity of a start-up company is a better option. It is rare to see multiple potential licensees bidding on an invention.

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**What can I expect to gain if my IP is licensed?**

Per ODU’s IP policy, a share of any financial return from a license is provided to the inventor(s). For more information, visit: [https://www.odu.edu/content/dam/odu/offices/bov/policies/1400/bov1424.pdf](https://www.odu.edu/content/dam/odu/offices/bov/policies/1400/bov1424.pdf)

Most inventors enjoy the satisfaction of knowing their inventions are being deployed for the benefit of the general public. New and enhanced relationships with businesses are another outcome that can augment one’s teaching, research and consulting. In some cases, additional sponsored research may result from the licensee.

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**What is the relationship between an inventor and a licensee, and how much of my time will it require?**

Many licensees require the active assistance of the inventor to facilitate their commercialization efforts, at least at the early stages of development. This can range from infrequent, informal contacts to a more formal consulting relationship. Working with a new business start-up can require substantially more time, depending on your role in or with the company and your continuing role as an academic. Your participation with a start-up is governed by ODU’s conflict of interest policy and the approval of your supervisor. Please see: [http://www.odu.edu/content/dam/odu/policies/university/5000/univ-5201.pdf](http://www.odu.edu/content/dam/odu/policies/university/5000/univ-5201.pdf)
What other types of agreements and considerations apply to Innovations Commercialization?

- **Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs)** are often used to protect the confidentiality of an invention during evaluation by potential licensees. NDAs also protect proprietary information of third parties that University researchers need to review in order to conduct research or evaluate research opportunities. ODU Innovations Commercialization enters into NDAs for University proprietary information shared with someone outside of the University. ODURF manages incoming NDAs related to research contracts.

- **Material Transfer Agreements (MTAs)**, used for incoming and outgoing materials at the University, are administered by ODU Innovations Commercialization (outgoing materials) or ODURF (incoming materials). These agreements describe the terms under which University researchers and outside researchers may share materials, typically for research or evaluation purposes. Intellectual property rights can be endangered if materials are used without a proper MTA.

- **Inter-Institutional Agreements** describe the terms under which two or more institutions (generally two universities) will collaborate to assess, protect, market, license, and share revenues received from licensing jointly-owned intellectual property.

- **Option Agreements**, or **Option Clauses** within research agreements, describe the conditions under which the University preserves the opportunity for a third party to negotiate a license for intellectual property. Option clauses are often provided in a Sponsored Research Agreement to corporate research sponsors or Option Agreements are entered into with third parties wishing to evaluate the technology prior to entering into a full license agreement.

- **Research Agreements** describe the terms under which sponsors provide research support to the University. These are negotiated by the Old Dominion University Research Foundation. More information about ODURF can be obtained at http://researchfoundation.odu.edu/
What activities occur during commercialization?

Most licensees continue to develop an invention to enhance the technology, reduce risk, prove reliability, and satisfy the market requirements for adoption by customers. This can involve additional testing, prototyping for manufacturability, durability and integrity, and further development to improve performance and other characteristics. Documentation for training, installation and marketing is often created during this phase. Benchmarking tests are often required to demonstrate the product/service advantages and to position the product in the market.

What is my role during commercialization?

Your role can vary depending on your interest and involvement, in the interest of the licensee in utilizing your services for various assignments, and any contractual obligations related to the license or any personal agreements.

What revenues are generated for the University if commercialization is successful? If unsuccessful?

Most licenses have licensing fees that can be very modest (for start-ups or situations in which the value of the license is deemed to warrant a modest license fee) or can reach hundreds of thousands of dollars. Royalties on the eventual sales of the licensed products can generate revenues, although this can take years to occur. Equity, if included in a license, can yield returns, but only if a successful equity liquidation event (public equity offering or a sale of the company) occurs. Most licenses do not yield substantial revenues.

A recent study of licenses at U.S. universities demonstrated that only 1% of all licenses yield over $1 million. However, the rewards of an invention reaching the market are often more significant than the financial considerations alone.

What will happen to my invention if the start-up company or licensee is unsuccessful in commercializing the technology? Can the invention be licensed to another entity?

Licenses typically include performance milestones that, if unmet, can result in termination of the license. This termination allows for subsequent licensing to another business.
ODU encourages the entrepreneurial spirit of its faculty and students, and supports start-up companies. ODU start-ups contribute to local Virginia economy as well as build academic worldwide transfer of scholarship into the economy. To support entrepreneurship, the University manages potential conflicts of interest by applying simple and consistent rules.

For more information, see: [http://www.odu.edu/content/dam/odu/policies/university/5000/univ-5201.pdf](http://www.odu.edu/content/dam/odu/policies/university/5000/univ-5201.pdf)

**How does the University define a conflict of interest?**

A conflict of interest can occur when a University employee, through a relationship with an outside organization, is in a position to:

1) influence the University’s business, research or other areas that may lead to direct or indirect financial gain,
2) adversely impact or influence one’s research or teaching responsibilities, or
3) provide improper advantage to others, to the disadvantage of the University.

**When should I seek guidance on conflict of interest?**

Whenever a question or uncertainty arises, you should seek guidance from your ODURF project representative for research-related issues and/or your ODU Innovations Commercialization licensing specialist for license-related issues. There are two times in particular when guidance is required: when research proposals are submitted to external sponsors (ODURF) and when a license, option or MTA is being considered with a company in which the faculty member, or any university employee, has an equity or management interest (ODU Innovations Commercialization).
What kinds of issues concern conflict of interest reviewers?

Examples include the appropriate and objective use of research, the treatment and roles of students, supervision of individuals working at both the University and a licensee company, and conflict of commitment (i.e., your ability to meet your University obligations).

What are examples of a conflict of commitment?

A conflict of commitment may exist if duties, assignments or responsibilities associated with a technology license or outside business arrangement have a negative impact on your ability to meet commitments associated with your ODU employment or exceed the amount of time available to you for these activities. The best approach is to fully disclose your situation to your supervisor and discuss the implications for your job responsibilities. Another example is when conducting research at ODU could affect faculty’s personal wealth. Therefore, research funding for work in faculty’s lab from a startup in which faculty owns equity is not allowed. In addition, federally funded research projects in collaboration with faculty’s startup are generally not allowed except with Phase I SBIR’s and STTR’s funding. However, employees of faculty’s startup should not be involved in research activities in faculty’s lab. Moreover, purchases from faculty’s startup should be comprehensively reviewed with head of faculty department. Last, faculty’s startup cannot restrict or delay access to results from ODU research. This rule applies to any entities with direct financial link to a faculty’s start-up.

How does the University manage conflict associated with research and Innovations Commercialization transactions?

ODU Innovations Commercialization representatives can advise you on conflict of interest issues or direct you to the appropriate Conflict of Interest (COI) Committee representative. It is the responsibility of the researcher or faculty member to disclose and document any outside arrangements that constitute disclosable situations or interests as described in ODU’s conflict of interest policy. A conflict of interest disclosure can be made to COI committee representative, whom will review and help to draft a conflict management plan. COI approval is required before any associated agreements can be approved.

For more information, see: http://www.odu.edu/content/dam/odu/policies/university/5000/univ-5201.pdf
**Revenue Distributions**

**How are license revenues distributed?**
ODURF is responsible for managing any expenses and revenues associated with technology agreements. Per the ODU’s IP Policy, revenues from license fees, royalties and equity—minus any unreimbursed patenting and file expenses—are shared with inventors.

**What if I receive equity (stock) from a company?**
Inventors whom receive equity from a licensee are permitted to share University revenues from the associated agreement.

**What are the tax implications of any revenues I receive from the University?**
License revenues are typically taxed as Form 1099 income. You should consult a tax advisor for specific advice.

**What happens to my share of licensing revenue if I waive rights to it?**
Revenues waived by inventors are distributed to the associated school/college and department/unit. To avoid potential tax liability, revenues waived by you to your department/unit must not be under your control. See ODURF for additional information.

**How are inventor revenues distributed if there are multiple inventors and/or multiple inventions in a license?**
Percentages of contributions made by named inventors should be set by the inventors early on at the invention disclosure form. All inventors must sign the disclosure form indicating acceptance of their percentages of contributions and subsequent revenue distributions.

**How is equity from a license distributed?**
When University equity is liquidated by ODURF, the resulting funds are distributed in accordance with ODU’s IP Policy.
Revenues from licensing activity of ODU’s Innovations Commercialization are shared among ODU schools and colleges, departments and units, inventors and partnering institutions. These revenues are reinvested in additional research and education, thus fostering the creation of the next generation of research, researchers and entrepreneurs.

In addition, the resultant relationships created and deepened with these activities support ODU’s missions, which would result in additional research projects, broader educational opportunities and collaborative investments, and an enhanced ability to create, retain and share valuable resources that contribute to our quality of life.