



How Macquarie University is doubling commercial deals on research projects through a focus on engagement and collaboration

It's no secret that Australian universities are at the forefront of delivering excellence in research and innovation globally. For decades, the Australian Higher Education sector has advanced a research culture and system that has been responsible for world-leading breakthroughs.

And with the spending and investment in research set to rise in the next 12 months, now is the time for Australia to make big advances in research innovation.

According to a recent report by PwC, worldwide research and development spending increased by 3.2 per cent in 2017, totaling to a spend of \$702 billion globally. Locally, the Australian Government is investing \$10.3 billion in research and experimental development over the next 12 months.

So what does this mean for the research development sector?

While increased investment is sure to bring about benefits, it is also driving increased competition between universities for their share of funding. In turn, increasing business communication and engagement strategies to create meaningful outcomes and real value propositions has never been more important.

But according to Anna Grocholsky, Director, Commercialisation and Innovation at Macquarie University, it's not all about the money.

"Money talks, but our objective at Macquarie University is to provide research with purpose. ROI is not just financial. It's about value, engagement and collaboration as well," she says.

Over the last two years, Macquarie University has doubled their commercialisation deals and has secured partnerships with companies such as the Voice Project and Bayer.

Ahead of the **3rd Annual Research Innovation Summit 2018**, Anna shares how her team has rolled-out programs focused on research, engagement, impact and how they are fostering a start-up mind-set to ensure research innovation and success.



A brief overview of Macquarie University's research framework

“Macquarie University has an organisation-wide framework called Framing Futures which is based on ensuring that our University is the place that people want to come to. Whether it’s a new student, undergrad or post-doc, a research academic, a professional staff member or industry partner; we want to be renowned as the place that people want to be and connect with.

Under this vision we have developed a research framework and strategy with priorities and themes outlining what our core capabilities are. This framework has been developed to encourage cross-faculty engagement and ensure research is undertaken with a planned purpose.

We also have a research engagement, impact and commercialisation framework. While our strategy is important, at the end of the day, I want to turn ideas into reality. These ideas have to be products/services that people want or need at a price that is affordable. We want to make a difference, inspire creative solutions and achieve maximum impact.”

Research with a purpose: building engagement and connections with industry

“Our objective is to undertake more research through partnerships and developing an understanding of what is needed in society for industry and end-users.

We’ve just started to recruit a few partnership managers. Their remit is to understand the capabilities of researchers and work closely with Faculty staff and other Macquarie University departments to enhance the impact of research projects. At present, the onus tends to be on the researcher to get a funding deal. If they could be introduced to industry partners they might not have spoken to before, they may undertake research with more of a planned purpose.

In saying that, I don’t want researchers to just follow the latest pot of gold. Pure research is also essential. Solving fundamental problems allowing one to collectively leapfrog to get to that next level. There is fundamental research that needs to be proven. It doesn’t have to have an implication and an impact straightaway, but it needs to be done.”

Moving beyond monetary ROI

“Return on Investment is not just financial, it’s about value, engagement and collaboration as well. IP protection is a big part of our strategy at Macquarie. We need patent protection to get industry to step up and invest money on a long term journey with us. A patent can give industry guidance and security to invest in research and development.



In our contracts, we ask Licensees to come back and do research with us, and that they acknowledge Macquarie University in the work we have done. This is a return on investment that's not directly monetary."

Challenges in ensuring commercialisation of research projects

"Academics are experts in their field. The unfortunate fact is, when it comes to collaboration, especially with other universities, we can't regulate our academics. We are service providers and our role is to be there when they need us.

A lot of my job is educating researchers that I'm here to help. Rather than asking researchers if they are working on something that's patentable, I ask: are you working on something that could benefit society or could be of commercial interest? By taking this approach at Macquarie we're turning things around. We have quadrupled the workload and doubled the number of commercialisation deals over the past two years.

It comes down to effective collaboration and communication. Asking the questions: Is the research commercially viable? If it is, how can we get bridge that gap from bench to reality? Who do we need to partner with? What is the best vehicle to get there?

In parallel, it's also important to consider: is the research patentable? Should we protect it? Often, a lot of tech transfer offices think that commercialisation is just the end of the journey. It's not. Research should have a planned purpose or goal to achieve."

Ensuring communication throughout the entire research lifecycle

"Communication is crucial to research innovation and success. We have a lot of information on our website to help people and we always share good news and success stories.

I also do roadshows quite often. I find that if you schedule a meeting and secure a lecture room, it's often on semester break, so no one turns up. Instead, I invite myself to team meetings. It reminds people that I exist. We supply researchers laboratory notebooks which have a little blurb on the back to say remember to talk to the Office of Commercialisation and Innovation before you publish your ideas. When someone reports an invention to us, we present them with a coffee cup with the Macquarie University logo and 'I'm an innovator' on it.

It's also important to be upfront with expectations. Once expectations are set, it's also helpful to follow up, thank them and provide regular progress reports."

Interested in learning more?

Join Anna at the **3rd Annual Research Innovation Summit 2018** where she will further explore initiatives of the Office of Commercialisation and Innovation at Macquarie University.

For more information please visit <https://researchinnovation.iqpc.com.au> or call +61 2 9229 1000 or email enquire@iqpc.com.au



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