Government Relations and U.S. University Technology Transfer

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Agenda:

• Introduction
• Stakeholders
• University Roles & Practices
• Challenges
• Summary
Introduction

• US universities rely heavily on federal funding:
  
  – Universities and colleges received 50.8% of the $31.0 billion total in federal obligations for basic research and accounted for 11.4% of total research and development obligations in FY 2012
  
  – Basic research at universities and colleges was estimated to increase to 11.8% of total R&D obligations in FY 2013 and was projected to grow to 12.5% in FY 2014

Source:
Funding Agencies, 2012

• Five federal departments and agencies provided $15.4 billion (98.3%) of all federal basic research obligations to universities and colleges:
  
  – Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) $9.2 billion (58.6%). \textit{(Includes NIH)}
  
  – NSF $3.8 billion (24.0%)
  
  – Department of Defense (DOD) $1.2 billion (7.6%)
  
  – Department of Energy (DOE) $0.7 billion (4.5%)
  
  – National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) $0.6 billion (3.7%)
Stakeholders

- Federal agencies
- Elected representatives
- Public Universities
  - State Governments
  - University governing boards / trustees
- Private Universities
  - University governing boards / trustees
- Investigators
- Students
- Public – taxpayers
- Corporations
University Roles

• Public (state) universities:

  • Strong role & commitment to economic development
    – Expectations of elected representatives

• Technology transfer / research office plays key role in economic development

• University federal & government relations (FR/GR) offices manage & control interactions with government agencies –
  – almost always, exclusively….
Challenges & (Best?) Practices

• The practice of university-government relations is complex

• Technology transfer offices must:
  – Acknowledge ‘rules of engagement’ with government agencies & particularly, elected officials
  – Be aware of current (legislative) issues
  – Be prepared to provide information to federal relations office – quickly!
  – Value and nurture relationships with colleagues in federal relations
Key Role for AUTM

When interacting with FR/GR & politicians:

• Representing the profession as a whole

• Deflect attention from individual professional practitioners

• AUTM represents practitioners, not universities – often overlooked
• Technology transfer professionals may benefit by engaging closely with their federal & other government relations colleagues

• Technology transfer professionals do not operate in isolation from society - & politics

• Whether or not we enjoy the engagement – we are affected by and dependent on politics, politicians & policies

• Maintaining knowledge of current events & developing close working relationships with federal other government relations colleagues is an important element of the technology transfer profession
Finally

Between FR/GR & TT

• Recognize and respect:
  – Boundaries
  – Roles & rules
  – Procedures & protocols

• Be aware of
  – Current (legislative) initiatives
  – Stakeholder points of view
  – History
Questions?