



Stanford eCorner

Maintaining Good Relationships

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Ku believes technology licensing is not always about licensing products and making money. It's also about fostering lasting relationships with companies and individuals. She talks about some of the interactions and relationships that Stanford University has with outside groups.



Transcript

So another philosophy that governs how we work is that we want to foster good industrial relationships. And that is really a much trickier thing that you might think. There are big companies who want to just see what Stanford has and they want to have a window into the technology but they don't want to pay any money for anything. They would like freedom of action. They would like to use our technology for what they want to use it for and not pay. So then you've got those kinds of companies who really just want to do their own thing without us bothering them. You also have a lot of little companies who want an exclusive license. They want an exclusive license so they can show it to an investor or wave it to the community and say, we have exclusivity. You can't touch us, or we can sue you if you infringe on our patents. So they want an exclusive license rather than just freedom of action.

So a lot of times we're juggling between a small company and a larger company who wants just freedom of action. Small companies want exclusivity. How do you know what's the best thing to do? We also want to foster good alumni relationships. Many of you are going to start companies. You're going to become rich we hope and we want you to be able to give back to the university. We don't want you to go out into the world with technology and say, Oh, Stanford really tried to nickel and dime us. It was horrible to deal with Stanford and I'm never going to give them a dime again. So we've got alumni to think about and the student relationship. And we have faculty who want to start companies who then, well, stay at Stanford, maintain a relationship with our office but they also want some technology to go to a company that they're affiliated with. So again, the faculty research OTL relationship could become very complicated.

But at the end of the day, we would like if possible, to maintain a good relationship with as many companies as possible. So in order to do these two things, we have to try to be reasonable. Again, as I said earlier we're not trying to wring every dollar out of a company. We want to take into consideration the factors that make the company successful or not successful or the hurdles that they're going through and then come up with a license agreement that makes sense for them and makes sense for us. We want to be flexible. So there's not usually just a template license agreement that we have to agree to. We try not to be bureaucratic.