

## LINKING INNOVATION TO IMPACT

A conversation with **DUSHYANT PATHAK**, Associate Vice Chancellor for Technology Management & Corporate Relations, and Executive Director of Venture Catalyst at the University of California, Davis



From life-saving treatments to breakthroughs in agricultural technologies, innovations from UC Davis impact lives around the world. Recognized as a top-ten public university in the United States, UC Davis attracted \$760 million in research funding last year.

Dushyant Pathak heads the university's Technology Management & Corporate Relations (TMCR) division, which is tasked with ensuring that emerging technologies provide the foundation for new products and services that address public needs and foster economic growth.

In 2016, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) designated UC Davis an Innovation and Economic Prosperity University in recognition of its strong commitment to economic engagement with local and regional communities.

**Given your background in business, what might industry leaders be surprised to learn about technology commercialization at UC Davis?**

I think there is a misconception that the goal of technology commercialization is to generate revenue for the university. What really drives us, is making sure that discoveries and innovations that emerge from the university benefit the public, not only through the advancements that improve our lives, but also to fuel the nation's economy. Financial return for the university is just one measure of our success. We recognize how essential it is to work together with industry to make sure research innovations translate into life-changing products and services. This mindset drives our approach at UC Davis.

**Any specific examples of this in action?**

We align incentives with objectives in agreements with large and small companies, rather than focusing solely on financial terms. Also, with startups, we take a combination of equity, fees and downstream payments, to minimize immediate cash outlays.

**What is special about the innovation platform at UC Davis?**

UC Davis is unique in the comprehensive nature of our research enterprise, which spans almost every discipline across science, engineering, medicine, and the humanities. We are widely recognized for our world-leading research in veterinary medicine and agriculture, but I believe that our defining strength is our ability to produce transformative technologies by bringing researchers in these areas together with clinicians in our medical center, engineers in our College of Engineering, and scientists in biology and the physical sciences.

**How are you leveraging this collaboration to drive technology commercialization?**

We pursue solutions for industry's challenges by assembling bold and creative interdisciplinary teams. For example, we're expanding the concept of One Health, which explores the link between the wellbeing of people, animals and the environment, by integrating our strengths in engineering to leverage what we call One Health and Engineering Synergies. This approach has yielded a dynamic innovation engine generating novel diagnostics, medtech, digital health and biopharmaceutical technologies.

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**How have you structured your office to best support technology commercialization?**

We modeled our organization based on our customer's needs. Licensing of available technologies is handled through our InnovationAccess team which is composed of industry segment experts. Our Office of Corporate relations facilitates and manages research collaborations with industry partners, while Venture Catalyst helps entrepreneurs develop viable startup companies based on university research and innovation.

**Your Venture Catalyst unit sounds like a relatively new and novel concept for driving new startups. Can you elaborate on what services they provide?**

When I arrived at UC Davis, I was surprised at our historically low numbers of startup companies. The technologies and innovations were there,

but we lacked the resources to support our entrepreneurs. In response, we launched Venture Catalyst, to help entrepreneurs navigate the complex path from company formation to commercial success. This experienced team provides resources including free company incorporation services, SBIR grant writing workshops, market intelligence, proof-of-concept funding, access to mentors and a network of business incubators.

**How have external partnerships factored into your strategy?**

We recognize that our ability to achieve translational research and commercialization objectives depends on effective external partnerships. A good example is our longstanding collaboration with Mars, Inc., which has supported cutting-edge research in agriculture, and nutrition for at least two decades, leading to the recent launch of the Innovation Institute for Food and Health, that is delivering big-impact breakthroughs in food, agriculture and health.



Imagine providing a lifetime of health benefits simply by restoring a baby's intestinal microbiome to its natural state.

We did, and now UC Davis spinoff Evolve BioSystems is building activated probiotic products based on our groundbreaking research on the infant gut microbiome and human breast milk.

imagine that

At UC Davis, we bring together top clinicians and experts in human and veterinary medicine, bioengineering, food and environmental science to drive innovation into societal impact.

Our collaborations and industry partnerships lead to translatable medicine and market-ready technology that improve lives.

It's a future worth imagining.

**UC DAVIS**  
TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT  
& CORPORATE RELATIONS

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