



December 22, 2025

Submitted via Regulations.gov

AUTM’s Response to the Notice of Request for Information; Accelerating the American Scientific Enterprise (No. 2025-21150)

Please accept AUTM’s response to the Notice of Request for Information; Accelerating the American Scientific Enterprise issued by the Office of Science and Technology Policy (the “RFI”).

Introduction

AUTM is the non-profit leader in efforts to educate, promote, and inspire professionals to support the further development and deployment of innovations arising from academic research. Our community is comprised of more than 3,000 Members who work in more than 800 universities, research centers, hospitals, businesses, and government organizations around the globe.

AUTM’s membership has traditionally stemmed—and continues to draw primarily—from academic settings. AUTM Members in such academic settings are focused on advancing early-stage inventions and other technologies to the marketplace, primarily through licensing and further development with partners (i.e., implementers). Between 2005 and 2024, our skilled professionals filed more than 288,000 new patent applications for academic inventors and negotiated more than 122,000 intellectual property license agreements on behalf of U.S. universities and academic research institutions. About 70% of these licenses are to startups and small companies. One model estimates that technology transfer activities carried out by AUTM Members over the past 30+ years contributed \$2 trillion to the U.S. gross industry output.¹ In the pharmaceutical space, it is estimated that since the Bayh-Dole Act was signed into law in 1980, more than 200 drugs and vaccines that originated from U.S. public research institutions were developed and approved by the FDA.² Many of these public-private partnerships involved university technologies.

¹ *Economic Contributions of University/Nonprofit Inventions in the United States 1996-2020*, Lori Pressman, Mark Planting, Carol Moylan and Jennifer Bond, available at https://autm.net/AUTM/media/About-Tech-Transfer/Documents/BIO-AUTM-Economic-Contributions-of-University-Nonprofit-Inventions_14JUN2022.pdf. This model is based on reported earned royalties and estimated domestically manufactured product sales.

² *The Role of Public-Sector Research in the Discovery of Drugs and Vaccines*, Stevens, A.J., Benson, D.E., Dodson, S.E. *et al.*, *J Technol Transf* 49, 857–867 (2024), available at <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMsa1008268>. See, for example, Table 1 (The Number of Drug Products Approved by the Food and Drug Administration and Originating from Public-Sector Research, According to Therapeutic Area, 1970–2009).

As such, AUTM Members are key players at the genesis of innovation, helping to translate early-stage inventions into new products and services through commercialization so that all Americans can benefit. We appreciate your consideration of AUTM's views, as scientific progress is at the forefront of our efforts to positively impact human lives, economic development, global competitiveness, and national security.

AUTM's Responses to Select RFI Questions

- A. (i) What policy changes to Federal funding mechanisms, procurement processes, or partnership authorities would enable stronger public-private collaboration and allow America to tap into its vast private sector to better drive use-inspired basic and early-stage applied research?

Stability in the rules encourages private investment, as private investors are reluctant to partner with universities and invest in federally funded innovations when the rules of the game can quickly change. One example is NIST's suggested reinterpretation of march-in rights during the last administration, which was inconsistent with the Bayh-Dole Act and prior interpretations. As another example, applying different rules/requirements across different agencies—and often for different agreements funded by the same agency (e.g. increased use of Other Transaction Agreements [OTAs] and Determination of Exceptional Circumstances [DECs])—results in inefficiencies, delays, and increased administrative costs to universities. More importantly, it means that fewer federally funded technologies will be developed into products and services that benefit the public. Harmonizing the rules across agreements and agencies (including consistent requirements regarding procurement) will promote innovation and economic development by ensuring technology transfer professionals have the time needed to identify and collaborate with industry partners to develop university inventions that benefited from federal funding.

Similarly, reliable patents attract investment. As AUTM recently noted³, USPTO efforts to improve patent quality during the patent examination process are far more efficient than having the PTAB start over and redo this work during post-grant proceedings.

- B. (ii) How can the Federal government better support the translation of scientific discoveries from academia, national laboratories, and other research institutions into practical applications? Specifically, what changes to technology transfer policies, translational programs, or commercial incentives would accelerate the path from laboratory to market?

First, renewing and sustaining SBIR/STTR funding is crucial, as these are important vehicles for partnerships between universities and industry. We urge the White House to encourage Congress

³ AUTM's Comments on the Revision to Rules of Practice Before the Patent Trial and Appeal Board (Docket No. PTO-P-2025-0025) [https://autm.net/AUTM/media/About-Tech-Transfer/Documents/AUTM-Comments-on-the-Revision-to-Rules-of-Practice-Before-the-Patent-Trial-and-Appeal-Board-\(Docket-No-PTO-P-2025-0025\).pdf](https://autm.net/AUTM/media/About-Tech-Transfer/Documents/AUTM-Comments-on-the-Revision-to-Rules-of-Practice-Before-the-Patent-Trial-and-Appeal-Board-(Docket-No-PTO-P-2025-0025).pdf).

to act quickly to reauthorize these important programs.

Second, reviving the Priority Review Voucher Program will generate funding for and encourage research and innovation by incentivizing industry to partner with research organizations to invest in rare disease research and accelerate drug development.

Third, maintaining reasonable and fair USPTO fees on patent applications that cover federally funded inventions would ensure that such inventions are patented when appropriate, which in turn attracts the investment needed for further development.

Finally, additional support for technology transfer offices will result in increased translation of scientific discoveries. These TTOs have the expertise to find the right partners for testing and development of federally funded inventions, and the government has received the benefits of the TTOs' expertise and efforts without having to fund those offices. Providing funding support for technology transfer operations will translate into economic activities (more startups, new jobs, and federal tax revenue) and is consistent with Congressional intent. The CHIPS Act, Section 10394 states: "The NSF shall make awards to establish collaborative innovation resource centers that promote regional technology transfer and technology development activities available to more than one institution of higher education and to other entities in a region." We believe continued and expanded support for the Technology, Innovation and Partnerships (TIP) Directorate at the National Science Foundation is also crucial, including the ENGINES program and the Accelerating Research Translation (ART) program.

- C. (iv) How can Federal policies strengthen the role played by small- and medium-sized businesses as both drivers of innovation and as early adopters of emerging technologies?

Universities, academic medical centers, and research institutions often partner with startups to move university inventions out of the lab. It is essential that these institutions have a stable, predictable, and unencumbered title to inventions that they license, particularly when licensing to startups and small businesses, as initially, they rely heavily on these inventions to attract funding.

In addition to licensing technologies to startups, universities, academic medical centers, and research institutions also provide crucial resources such as mentoring, technology incubators, entrepreneur-in-residence programs, and workforce training and education. Therefore, federal support of these entities and their highly motivated inventors and entrepreneurs equates to support for startups and small businesses.

- D. (vi) What reforms will enable the American scientific enterprise to pursue more high-risk, high-reward research that could transform our scientific understanding and unlock new technologies, while sustaining the incremental science essential for cumulative production of knowledge?

Universities, academic medical centers, and research institutions are at the forefront of high-risk, high-reward research because research as such institutions is driven by curiosity and

creativity. This research was instrumental in disruptive technologies such as CRISPR gene editing, immuno-oncology, and Google searching. And these institutions have much more to contribute, including in areas of key importance to our nation and to this administration, such as innovations that decrease healthcare costs (e.g., enabling smaller healthcare providers to perform more procedures, increasing competition and efficiency; developing new treatments and technologies; and advancing digital health, robotics, AI, and quantum computing).

Disruptive innovation by academic institutions has a proven track record of creating new jobs (think about the computer industry and the dot.com era) and military solutions.

Future such innovations can further benefit and provide security for Americans by reducing reliance on foreign sources of rare earths and rare earth processing, helping farmers increase their profits, and reducing computer hacking (e.g., via quantum cryptography and computing).

- E. (viii) How can the Federal government leverage and prepare for advances in AI systems that may transform scientific research—including automated hypothesis generation, experimental design, literature synthesis, and autonomous experimentation? What infrastructure investments, organizational models, and workforce development strategies are needed to realize these capabilities while maintaining scientific rigor and research integrity?

AUTM agrees that AI has transformative power and the potential to reshape the scientific discovery process. Whether directly or indirectly, AI can and will increase the speed of innovation. For centuries, universities, academic medical centers, and research institutions have been homebase for much of this nation’s research and knowledge generation. Thus, it’s logical to conclude that these entities are properly positioned to make AI breakthroughs and apply them to scientific processes for the benefit of future generations. These institutions remain active nurseries for expanding AI research in new areas, developing AI agents, curating datasets, and translating innovation to the market through technology transfer.

Universities, academic medical centers and research institutes are additionally taking on the challenge to strengthen American workforce development so that all layers of the workforce can and will work with AI in new ways. Efforts by the Federal government to support and promote AI at all levels – including how science is done in the laboratory – will be helpful to this task.

Finally, AUTM has previously spoken on the importance of pragmatic policies regarding copyrights and data rights that protect data makers as much as data users.⁴ The USPTO should also ensure that AI-enabled innovations are patentable under the same rules that apply to other inventions that were made with the assistance of technological and computational tools. If U.S. intellectual property frameworks fail to provide predictable protection for AI-enabled inventions, private capital will migrate toward jurisdictions with clearer ownership and commercialization rules—undermining America’s leadership in AI-driven science.

⁴ AUTM’s Comments on the USPTO’s Inventorship Guidance for AI-Assisted Inventions (Docket No. PTO–P–2023–0043) <https://autm.net/AUTM/media/About-Tech-Transfer/Documents/Comments-on-USPTO’s-Inventorship-Guidance-for-AI-Assisted-Inventions.pdf>.

- F. (ix) What specific Federal statutes, regulations, or policies create unnecessary barriers to scientific research or the deployment of research outcomes? Please describe the barrier, its impact on scientific progress, and potential remedies that would preserve legitimate policy objectives while enabling innovation.

A tax on university licensing income will decrease innovation by disincentivizing both the kind of research that has practical applications and the technology transfer activities necessary to realize those practical applications. As noted above, the government benefits economically and socially from the expertise and efforts of the technology transfer activities funded by universities, academic medical centers, and research institutions. Undermining those efforts would be counterproductive.

In addition, reducing undue administrative burdens at every level will only enhance innovation. As noted elsewhere in this response, one way to reduce the administrative burden would be to harmonize requirements across federal agencies and agreements.

- G. (xi) How can the Federal government foster closer collaboration among scientists, engineers, and skilled technical workers, and better integrate training pathways, recognizing that breakthrough research often requires deep collaboration between theoretical and applied expertise?

Innovation is a key driver of economic growth in the United States. Global competition for top researchers is intensifying, which threatens the country's competitive edge and the ability of U.S. businesses to remain at the cutting edge of technology. AUTM recommends providing funding to support burgeoning entrepreneurs in academic research centers to ensure that there is adequate training for technology transfer, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

In general, laws and rules that make it difficult to work with international collaborators – abroad and here in the U.S. – result in less collaboration. Similarly, increased uncertainty regarding whether awarded federal grants will be terminated early results in less innovation because it leads to difficulties in recruiting and maintaining talent, whether that talent comes from the U.S. or from other countries. Promising scientific researchers are incentivized to pursue other interests, or to pursue their research interests in other countries where funding is more reliable and predictable.

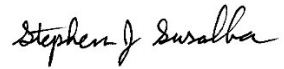
- H. (xiii) How can the Federal government strengthen research security to protect sensitive technologies and dual-use research while minimizing compliance burdens on researchers?

As noted above, having different requirements across federal agencies makes compliance more difficult and more expensive for universities. Efforts to harmonize requirements and provide resources (such as updated lists of vetted partners versus bad actors) would help universities spend less time and money on compliance, attract more foreign investment from safe resources, and ensure protection of sensitive research.

Conclusion

AUTM appreciates the opportunity to respond to this Request for Information and looks forward to a continued productive dialog on this and other matters critical to the growth of American innovation and the health and economic well-being of Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stephen J. Susalka".

Stephen J. Susalka, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer