

UC San Diego Technology Transfer Celebrates 20 Years of Innovation and Impact



Photos by Erik Jepsen/UC San Diego Publications

Two decades after UC San Diego created a special unit to turn ideas into inventions, campus leaders and community supporters celebrated “20 Years of Innovation and Impact” at a recent gathering at the Ida and Cecil Green Faculty Club.

The 20th anniversary of the UC San Diego Technology Transfer Office (TTO) drew a standing-room-only crowd that included distinguished faculty innovators and young alumni entrepreneurs. Hosted by Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla, the event featured a keynote address by Qualcomm Founder Irwin M. Jacobs and congratulations from San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer, who proclaimed April 14, 2015 as “UC San Diego Innovation and Impact Day.”

The campus’s high-yield technology transfer program “is one that many people across the country are trying to emulate,” said Faulconer. “Our city would not be what it is without UC San Diego. So thank you for what you are doing. You have a city that supports you and a mayor that

stands behind you.”

Throughout the evening, overhead displays showed statistics on TTO’s 20-year impact (see sidebar), and innovators gave TTO more than 40 video “shout-outs.” The recorded tributes ranged from a simple “Thanks for being you, guys!” from WowWee President Peter Yanofsky and his band of spinning robotic toys to a spirited “Happy Birthday!” chorus from NanoCollect Biomedical CEO Jose Morachis and his colleagues.



Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla

Vice Chancellor for Research Sandra Brown described the extended campus community as “a family” and said, “TTO is what brings us together to transfer our science out for public good. It’s our way of assisting the

Technology Transfer Office: 20 Years of Innovation & Impact

- 204 UC San Diego technology start-ups
- 1,070 licenses granted
- 3,600+ U.S. patent applications
- 1,090 U.S. patents issued
- \$334 million of income
- 6,174 innovations disclosed

innovators and the entrepreneurs on campus and linking them to the energetic community that we have in San Diego.”

In his introduction of Jacobs, Chancellor Khosla noted that the telecom legend started out as a UC San Diego engineering professor with breakthrough ideas about wireless technology. “When you think about innovation and entrepreneurship, and when you think about who defines San Diego, Irwin Jacobs captures it all,” he said.

Expressing great pride in the campus’s technology transfer record, Jacobs recalled the early years when faculty members began consulting with industry to explore commercialization of inventions

“I rationalized leaving academia and going into business,” he noted, “by saying that over the years, faculty often told students that all this theory would be useful in the real world, so this was an opportunity to show that. The result was the launch of Jacobs’ first San Diego company,



Qualcomm Founder Irwin M. Jacobs

Linkabit, and the subsequent launch of Qualcomm, which, he said, “has benefited greatly from so many wonderful students graduating from UCSD.”

Jacobs has remained closely involved with the UC San Diego campus as a benefactor, a mentor, and a partner. “We’ve invested in at least seven companies that have sprung up out of UCSD,” he said. “In each of the cases, they have commented on how well technology transfer did occur.”

“I congratulate all of you in the Technology Transfer Office,” said Jacobs. “It has indeed been working very smoothly. ... The first 20 years of technology transfer have obviously been successful, allowing many companies to start up and bring back benefits to the university. I suspect the next 20 years are going to be even more spectacular, and it’s going to be fun to be here and watch it all happen.”

The event culminated with a video that profiled four successful products, including those from three UC San Diego start-ups: Electrozyme, Emotient, and Topera. The inventors of all four technologies praised TTO’s contributions in guiding them from concepts to patents to products.



“Tech Transfer encourages researchers to work with them,” said Joshua Windmiller, co-founder and CEO of Electrozyme whose wearable biosensors came out of his Ph.D. engineering project in the lab of Professor Joe Wang. “They helped us protect our innovations so that we would be well positioned to either license the technology or approach other entities for a partnership.”

“There is a whole science to building a business,” said Marian Bartlett, founder and lead scientist of Emotient, a front-runner in market analytics based on facial expression data. “We received a lot of guidance on that from the Tech Transfer Office. They were invaluable.”

“TTO has been with us all along on this exciting ride,” said Ruchir Sehra, co-founder of Topera, a pioneer in advanced treatment of atrial fibrillation. “They have been there to support us and advise us. They have been a great friend to us.”

“Physicians who do research know nothing of patent law,” said Ranjan Dohil, , whose reformulation of an existing drug was developed by Raptor Pharmaceuticals and became a breakthrough treatment for the orphan disease nephropathic cystinosis. “The Tech Transfer Office made it a completely seamless process for us.”

Jane Moores, who has directed TTO since 2007, credited UC San Diego innovators, company partners and entrepreneurs for driving 20 years of successful technology transfer at UC San Diego. “It was their hard work and vision that made it all possible,” she said, “and we are gratified that we were able to play a part.”