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UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

PHILADELPHIA 19104

OFFICE OF THE VICE PROVOST
FOR GRADUATE STUDIES
AND RESEARCH

106 COLLEGE HALL CO

RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

FEB 26 1979

February 23, 1979

Dr. Richard C. Atkinson, Director
National Science Foundation
Washington, D.C. 20550

Dear Dick:

I've received a copy of a November 10, 1978 letter to you from George Olson, Vice President for Research, Colorado State University, suggesting a matching grant program to encourage universities to establish and maintain effective technology transfer programs. Although I have some questions about the details of George's suggestion, I would like to express my support for the general idea and to suggest that it be given serious and careful consideration.

Over the past several years we here at Penn have devoted considerable attention to the question of how best to help our researchers get research results into the hands of those who can develop and apply them for the general benefit of society. As you are well aware, this requires bridging worlds with very different purposes and reward systems, the academic world and the business world. It is not an easy task. Nevertheless, I am convinced that we in the universities must do a better job of it, especially at a time of growing concern about the health of innovation and technology in this country. Our solution to the problem has been to establish a relationship with an aggressive for-profit patent management firm. Other universities might choose different solutions.

It is my impression that many if not most universities could vastly improve their technology transfer activities and would do so with some incentive. I think Olson's suggestion contains the germ of just the right kind of incentive.

One further suggestion: NSF alone might well run an experiment along these lines. But if it works, such a system might be equally or more

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effective in the mission agencies. Perhaps some discussion of the idea in the right inter-agency groups would be appropriate.

Sincerely,



D. N. Langenberg
Vice Provost for Graduate
Studies and Research

DNL/wwk

cc: George Olson
Tony Merritt ✓