INTRODUCTION

Many policy makers and researchers consider knowledge transfer between academia and industry as one of the most promising measures to strengthen economic development. The idea of linking academia and industry is not new. Back in 1910 research universities were established, which strongly emphasized industry-related research as part of their activities and were funded by enterprises in order to tap this knowledge (see Matkin, 1990, for the history of technology transfer at four U.S. research universities—MIT, U.C. Berkeley, Penn State, and Stanford). Knowledge transfer has increased considerably during the last few decades. Many universities have established offices aimed at improving relations with industry. The performance of these offices varies considerably. One example for a quantitative performance indicator is license revenues of U.S. universities (Artley, Dobrauz, Plasonig, & Strasser, 2003).

Only a handful of examined universities actually draw profit from it. The majority pay more for legal advice and fees than they earn from license income. It is obvious that the performance variances depend on many factors like staff resources at the transfer offices, type of university research (basic vs. applied, technical vs. non-technical domains), the brand of the university as well as prior industrial relationships, to name just a few. Not all of these factors can be changed in the short run, but knowing them and streamlining actions towards their improvement can lead to sustainable changes, in the end positively influencing economic performance. Despite the long history and recent efforts to improve university-industry collaborations, the full potential does not yet seem to be exploited (Starbuck, 2001). Jankowski (1999) and Clough (2003) confirm the decrease of federal funding for universities and point to increasing collaborations between academia and industry, which in their view comprises the danger of leaving fundamental frontier research, vital for breakthrough innovations, behind. At the same time, industry increasingly relies on external knowledge sources to keep up with the pace of...
Knowledge Transfer between Academia and Industry

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BACKGROUND

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MAIN FOCUS OF THE ARTICLE

The article addresses regional as well as national governments trying to provide the right framework for parties involved in knowledge transfer—universities’ managers, who would like to establish closer links with industry, as well as representatives of industry, who plan to or already use external knowledge sources like universities. The first part of this article deals with motives at different organizational levels of the parties directly involved; the second part discusses barriers negatively influencing knowledge transfer. The article concludes with some suggestions for future actions in order to amplify motives and overcome barriers, thus increasing...