Tech Launch Arizona Changes to Meet Campus and Ecosystem Needs

Tech Launch Arizona
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Just like the talented inventors, innovative technologies and startup companies it serves, Tech Launch Arizona itself is constantly adapting to maximize its impact in providing services to help the UA community commercialize the inventions stemming from the innovative work of UA faculty and staff.

The office, which reports directly to the UA Office of the President, consists of three distinct, collaborative units:

- Technology Transfer, which focuses on discovering and protecting UA intellectual property stemming from research.
- Business Development, which facilitates the creation of successful startup companies founded on UA intellectual property.
- Tech Parks Arizona, which strategically manages and leverages the assets of the University’s tech parks to build connections between the world of high-tech business and the research and educational enterprises of the University.

This month, TLA said farewell to Sherry Hoskinson, who is retiring from her position as director of business development. She was hired in 2013 to build the unit, and has been instrumental in developing and shaping the organization and its strategies and services offerings, especially in the areas of network building and startup creation. Prior to that, she served as director of the McGuire Center for Entrepreneurship at the Eller College of Management. All told, Hoskinson served the UA for 23 years.

"We're very excited for Sherry and look forward to seeing great things from her next move," said TLA Vice President David Allen. "She has helped us create a great foundation, and now we're tasked with building on her many accomplishments."

Joann MacMaster is stepping in as the new director for business development. She joined TLA in 2013 to lead venture development activities and has brought a wealth of experience and success to the TLA mission.

MacMaster's resume includes serving as director of the Arizona Center for Innovation, as well as program director for the McGuire Center for Entrepreneurship. She also has an extensive background as a technology entrepreneur, and served as a senior executive for three multinational companies.

MacMaster will be leading these changes in specific TLA business development programs:

Commercialization Partners
TLA has engaged a team of 25 volunteer Entrepreneurs-in-Residence and Executives-in-Residence—what it calls “commercialization partners”—to help startups with activities such as leadership team formation, business and funding planning, licensing UA intellectual property and more.

TLA will transition to having a few part-time in-house mentors who will be integral members of the TLA professional team. Additional volunteer Entrepreneurs-in-Residence and Executives-in-Residence will support this team with their experience, advice and coaching.

A new role also will be introduced: the Mentor-in-Residence. These mentors will be experts in specific areas of technology; initially, TLA will engage one focused on biotechnology, one on biomedical devices, and one on engineering and physical sciences.

**The Ecosystem Network**

During its early stages, TLA and the Business Development unit engaged in a public-private partnership with the city of Tucson and local technology company Azteria to develop an extended network of industry and subject-matter experts to help advise UA employees on the best commercial pathways for emerging UA technologies.

As a result of this work, TLA today has a network of more than 1,300 experts, the majority of whom are UA alumni.

In 2016, TLA will refresh and expand this network to address a pipeline that has more than doubled in a few short years. To facilitate this process and grow its capabilities, TLA will hire a full-time commercialization network manager.

As students represent an essential part of the ecosystem, this new network manager, in close partnership with TLA’s marketing and communications manager, will take on the task of engaging with students and student organizations across campus.

**SBIR/STTR Tech House**

In 2014, TLA launched **SBIR/STTR Tech House**[^4], an initiative focused on increasing the activity and effectiveness of new and small businesses applying for Small Business Innovation Research, or SBIR, funding or Small Business Technology Transfer, or STTR, funding.

Through Tech House, TLA helps to connect UA researchers with small businesses, prime contractors and supportive resources to build strategic teams that can respond to SBIR and STTR solicitations put forth by federal agencies such as the Department of Energy, the Department of Defense and others.

These awards represent a funding opportunity for southern Arizona companies, and TLA has engaged community partners such as the Arizona Commerce Authority in the work of helping all of these different entities connect with one another.

With its community partners now facilitating these connections, TLA is refocusing the Tech House resources on directly supporting UA researchers and their direct partners in the community in their pursuit of SBIR or STTR funding opportunities.
Looking Ahead to Fiscal Year 2017

TLA is positioned to deliver exceptional results against its Roadmap strategic plan, keeping in line with the UA's overall Never Settle [5] strategic and academic plan.

Next steps for the Business Development unit include management of the recently awarded UA NSF I-Corps Site designation [6], and further integration with the Tech Parks Arizona [7] incubator, the Arizona Center for Innovation [8].

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Links:
[2] https://entrepreneurship.eller.arizona.edu/
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