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## The Latest Online Match: Companies Can Hook Up With Universities on Tech Transfer

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Orlando

Online sites where universities list their available technologies are nearly as old as the Internet, but a site unveiled here Thursday is expected to be about more than e-commerce. It's an attempt by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation to foster collaboration among institutions, companies, and professors.

The site, [iBridge Network](#), introduced during the annual meeting of the Association of University Technology Managers, lets institutions share information about inventions and research tools developed by their faculty members. It also includes features that allow scientists or companies to sign up for alerts about new developments in certain fields. In some cases, they will be able to license rights to technologies listed on the site with the click of a button.

The site describes inventions from nearly 70 universities, including places like Columbia University and the University of Wisconsin at Madison, which are known for their sophistication in technology licensing.

Many of the technologies listed by those institutions, and others, are software products or cell lines—the kinds of research materials that institutions often make available to each other, or to companies, for free or at nominal cost.

Laura Paglione, the director of advancing innovation for the foundation, said the iBridge site will make those exchanges easier. It will also be a way for industry to learn about the work of academics that might be of commercial interest.

Working with industry is a major theme of the meeting, which has drawn about 1,500 attendees from universities and industry, more than 20 percent of them from abroad—and the topic is being discussed not only during the formal sessions.

Given the state of the economy, that's hardly surprising.

Technology-transfer officials report that in many cases, licensing deals with companies are being delayed because the companies don't have the ready cash to pay the license fees. Boston University, for one, says that for some deals, it is loosening its typical requirement that the licensee pick up the costs for patenting an invention, rather than lose the deal entirely.

And with venture-capital firms facing their own credit crunch, many officials said they are finding it hard to find backers for start-up companies based on academic inventions.

Faced with tighter budgets and increasing expectations that they produce higher revenue, some tech-transfer offices are also showing unusual interest in a service offered by some vendors here: firms that conduct royalty audits to make sure licensees pay what they should be paying.

Judy Ann Byrd, a director at Invotex Group, said research by her company found that, typically, only about 20 percent of all licenses are fully adhered to, and in half the cases, licensees are underpaying by at least 10 percent. Audits are not a new technique for universities, but Ms. Byrd said the interest level seems higher this year. "We've had a lot more inquiries," she said.

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