

## **UCE Response to Lambert Review of Business-University collaboration.**

Richard Riley, Director Corporate Development Centre

On behalf of UCE can I warmly welcome your review of business interaction with Universities and I can guarantee that UCE will support your work throughout the coming months. This issue is very close to our heart and occupies a good deal of our best minds. As our mission statement says, UCE is committed to the development of regional businesses and communities through the provision of near-market and applied research, consultancy and training.

**We believe that our credentials and track record in servicing the needs of business are second to none.**

The most striking example of our dedication to knowledge and technology transfer is the re-invention of our Faculty of Engineering and Computer Technology as the Technology Innovation Centre tic within Birmingham's Millennium Point. This business-facing centre operates as a subsidiary of the UCE group and is the model for Universities fully committed to addressing the needs of business. Reflecting the tic's unique position I have attached a response from Barry Henley, the tic's Chief Executive, along with my own response on behalf of UCE.

I have highlighted below three issues which we feel go to the heart of your review.

1. The status of knowledge transfer.

It is still clearly evident that the value system operating within Government and beyond places traditional blue-sky research above applied and near-market research activity. This is reflected in for example, the Governments funding allocations and the league table metrics applied by the national press. Until the status of business interaction is valued equally with other University activity we will continue to disadvantage and discourage Universities engaged in economic and social regeneration. Greater parity is needed to motivate Universities and their staff to meet this agenda.

2. The myriad of funding schemes.

Universities working closely with business have become accustomed to pursuing a growing range of funding streams. Engaging European, national government and regional and local schemes can easily become the core business of knowledge transfer professionals working with Universities. This puts the 'funder' in the role of customer and labels businesses as beneficiaries and secondary. Our request would be for funding bodies to perform some joined up thinking! Further streamlining of the processes associated with bidding, approval and monitoring funding to free up valuable University resources to deliver to the real customers – businesses.

3. Long term funding.

UCE has made a long-term commitment to knowledge transfer. In order to facilitate this aim we have secured HEFCE and DTI funding to put in place corporate and project teams and resources dedicated to business support. These teams have over many years built up trust, credibility and experience in their dealings with businesses, regeneration agencies and funding bodies. In order to push on from this solid base we MUST make longer-term commitments to these individuals and their clients. The current short term competitive funding of University-business interaction by HEFCE and others does not allow us to make these commitments. Government, maybe via RDA's, must commit to the longer term funding of excellent University-business interaction to give those staff involved the same reassurances that their research excellent colleagues have received over many years.

Finally, I would welcome the chance to discuss further with your team our experiences, concerns and solutions to ensure your report has the maximum impact.

R. Riley 15<sup>th</sup> April 2003.

## UCE submission to Lambert Review of Business-University Collaboration

Lambert Review requests in italics, UCE responses in normal type.

*'UCE is a large and diverse urban University with a long tradition of providing higher and further education for the people of Birmingham and beyond. This commitment to those who wish to apply their knowledge through professional practice, and to near-market and applied research and consultancy, gives UCE a closeness to its social, economic and cultural communities and makes it a major contributor to the development of the region.'*

Extract from UCE's Corporate Plan.

*We would like to identify best practice and examples of excellence in business-university collaboration in the UK and abroad. Some examples of the types of collaboration that we would be interested in hearing about include:*

- Industry's use of the information contained in academic publications, and academia's use of industry patents and prototypes or vice versa.*
- Joint ventures between universities and business, for example, personnel exchange or collaborative research and development projects.*
- Informal contacts, for example, meetings and conferences, use of science parks, business-university liaison, industry sponsored university posts or studentships, work experience for students, business contributions to curriculum development, academic secondments in industry and provision of continuing professional development training by universities for business.*
- Formal contracts, for example, the use of licensing, research contracts, consulting projects, establishment of spinout companies, product testing, or business support.*

UCE has unique strengths and a proven track record of successfully working with a wide range of organisations and partners to the benefit of business and communities.

These strengths include:

- Extensive expertise in the area of near market and applied research
- An emphasis on professional practice, vocational development and Continuing Professional Development
- Well developed sectoral and clusters networks
- Extensive knowledge and technology transfer experience, especially with Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)
- An established presence in support of the local community and its citizens
- Innovative curriculum development with employer participation
- Broadband access and content development capability and leadership; such as Digital Library, UserLab and MidMAN
- Extensive sandwich, part-time and short course provision with business, community and professional body associations.

We provide vocational education in a wide range of professional practice disciplines. We also provide:

- Consultancy and continuing professional development to business and individuals
- Consultancy to SMEs through a wide range of publicly funded programmes
- Assistance to regional businesses through tailored programmes, such as TCS (Teaching Company Schemes)

Examples of success include;

The establishment of the West Midlands Centre for the Built Environment. This project was delivered by UCE in collaboration with the National Training Organisation, the Twelve Professional bodies for the sector and the local TEC/LSC.

Bespoke training for large organisations. Out of existing academic links, UCE's Business School has developed and is delivering bespoke courses to Central Trains and MG Rover. As a result, both companies provided letters of support and now sit on the steering committee for the faculty's foundation degree. Further to achieving preferred supplier status with MG Rover, UCE has engaged three other faculties in work with the company on various projects.

Further examples of UCE's near-market research and business support centres are given at the end of this document.

*We would also be interested to learn how the relationship came about. Were your local Regional Development Agency or Sector Skills Council involved?*

Our relationships with industry come about through a range of contacts including;

- Market research and targeted marketing aligned to client management activity.
- Referrals from representative groups such as, the Manufacturing Advisory Service and Contact (a regional project involving all the HEIs in the West Midlands and the Business Link network; managed by UCE)
- Longstanding relationships with business, training and R&D managers in West Midlands companies, the appointment of TCS Associates, and student placements in industry.

The Regional Development Agency and the Sector Skills Councils are currently rarely directly involved in the formation of these relationships. We do however expect this situation to change as their respective roles are clarified. It is more common for the Local Learning and Skills Council and Chamber of Commerce to work with the University directly in support of individual businesses, business groups or employees.

*What more could be done to facilitate successful partnerships?*

Our experience suggests that incentives for employers and employees are needed to generate interest in further study to improve competences and to update knowledge. Where an employer is not aware of the benefits to their own operation of the specific competences that will be acquired, there is a resistance to funding the training required. SMEs in particular find it hard to justify paying for the time that their employee spends away from work studying. Individuals who want to gain further qualifications to further their career are highly motivated and perform excellently alongside their full-time peers. Their employers should be encouraged to release them by financial incentives, at least equivalent to the tax relief offered towards support of R&D.

*If you do not have, or would like to strengthen such relationships, what are the main barriers to doing so?*

*These might include:*

- *Management and organisational issues. How can businesses and universities best organise themselves in order to benefit from each other's resources? Do the present mechanisms for priority setting, decision-making and funding in the university sector*

*help or hinder business-university collaboration? What changes might encourage collaboration?*

The current short term competitive funding of University-business interaction by HEFCE and others does not allow us to make these commitments. Government, maybe via RDA's, must commit to the longer term funding of excellent University-business interaction to give those staff involved the same reassurances that their research excellent colleagues have received over many years.

Until the status of business interaction is valued equally with other University activity we will continue to disadvantage and discourage Universities engaged in economic and social regeneration.

- *Technology transfer. What are the barriers? How can it be made more effective?*

Our request would be for funding bodies to perform some joined up thinking! Streamlining the processes associated with bidding, approving and monitoring funding would free up valuable University resources to deliver to the real customers – businesses.

Internally we have undertaken this exercise and have used a range of funding sources to address the needs of businesses in a coherent manner. The whole can be greater than the sum of the parts!

- *Intellectual property. Are the present arrangements understood and appropriate?*

Yes, we agree in advance to whom the IP will belong or how it is to be shared, depending on the effort by each party and the amount of background IPR brought along by each of us.

*A third set of questions relates to how business can attract the best graduates and postgraduates with the skills that they require, especially in technology. Questions include:*

- *Is the quality of graduate recruits satisfactory? Are there any obvious gaps in terms of skills and disciplines?*
- *How do businesses, individually or collectively, communicate their needs for specific scientific or technical skills and for the development of relevant courses in universities?*
- *How could more attractive career paths for science and technology graduates and postgraduates be developed?*
- *What plans does business have to attract the best talent in the future and are the universities made aware of them? If not, what more could be done to facilitate such a dialogue?*

*The review team will also want to understand whether financial considerations currently help or hinder the relationships between business and universities. Questions include:*

- *Are there ways in which the present financing arrangements could be made more effective?*
- *Has the introduction of R&D tax credits influenced business demand for research and skills, and if so, how? Are there other means to the same end?*

Our request would be for funding bodies to perform some joined up thinking! Streamlining the processes associated with bidding, approving and monitoring funding would free up valuable University resources to deliver to the real customers – businesses.

R. Riley 15<sup>th</sup> April 2003.

### **Existing work with business across UCE**

UCE has had a long involvement in business support activity. HEROBC I funding was used to bring a co-ordination to this work and act as a gateway for business and community to the UCE's services.

These services include consultancy, applied research, technology transfer and bespoke course provision across a wide range of vocational subjects. In addition UCE also has a number of centres of expertise and research serving the needs of business. Some of these are listed below to provide a picture of the type and scale of this activity.

#### **The Midlands Centre for the Built Environment (MCBE)**

This Centre was initiated by UCE in collaboration with twelve professional bodies and the National Training Organisation, supported by Birmingham and Solihull TEC. It aims to co-ordinate CPD and encourage closer working relationships in the industry, supporting national initiatives.

#### **The Electronic Commerce Centre of Excellence (UCECOM)**

Designed to help SME's in the development of electronic commerce. The Centre provides SME's with all the tools and knowledge they need to operate a business on the web. It also offers everything needed to build a web site and provide help and support in web site maintenance as well as web site hosting.

#### **Digital Media Centre ( DMC)**

Provides state of the art facilities to enable local, national and international organisations to develop. DMC has extensive production resources that include sound, graphics, text, animation, still and moving images and is involved in technology transfer, applied research, education and training, innovation, interactivity and quality.

**The Jewellery Industry Innovation Centre (JIIC)** supports the unique jewellery industry in the centre of the city. The Centre facilitates technology transfer and encourages take up of new processes by WM and UK industry. JIIC also undertakes consultancy, research and development into innovative manufacturing processes and materials, and provides design and development facilities using high and low technology solutions.

#### **Virtual Gallery of Contemporary Jewellery**

The Virtual Gallery of Contemporary Jewellery is an electronic gallery that aims to go beyond what can be done in more traditional publications such as books or catalogues. It is therefore exploiting new technologies to show jewellery in new ways. Users will be able to see different views of the same piece of jewellery in an exhibition, see close-up images of it, or see it worn on the body. It will be comprised of eleven small exhibitions in which cutting-edge jewellery, principally from the second half of the 1990s, will be shown by makers from all around the world, including Europe, North America, Australia, Japan, but principally by those makers working in Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter.

**The Centre for Product Design Information (CPDI)** is a website covering industrial design issues and information. It brings together the design research expertise of UCE's Birmingham Institute of Art and Design and transfers this expertise to SMEs. As the website evolves, it will also include design research and case studies of effective design management and implementation. It will provide sign posting to further information either in web form or written literature

**The Creative Network** is a community of designers and professionals in the Creative Industries. The network focuses on their lifelong learning needs, with particular emphasis on Internet-based learning and training and regular workshops.

**The West Midlands Knowledge Management Centre (KMC)**

KMC is a regional centre which aims to develop knowledge management in SMEs to aid their competitiveness.

**Entrepreneurship Research and Development Centre (ERDC)**

ERDC is committed to enterprise and entrepreneurial activity through a variety of research, educational, training and consultancy activities for SME's.

**The Digital Library**

The University of Central England (UCE) received over £1million of HEFCE capital funding in 2000 to develop UCEEL, a digital library. The digital library now provides support for distance learning and improved electronic access to copyright cleared resources, special collections and high demand information. UCEEL is being developed to support teaching, learning and research across the University, this will include access to e-learning courses and multimedia materials, including audio and video.

**Centre for Public Policy and Urban Change (CePPUrb)**

CePPUrb is involved in research and public policy development at a local, regional, national and international level. It has a multidisciplinary approach and perspective, bridging theoretical underpinnings of public policy and practical application.

**Sustainable Environments Research Centre (SERC)**

Carries out research into urban quality, integrated spatial planning and transport planning, urban conservation policy, as well as supporting research students in the field of urban regeneration

**CISCO Centre**

UCE's Technology Innovation Centre (tic) is the CISCO lead Academy for Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA). The tic provides courses in computer networking not only to local businesses, but also to the trainers from academies throughout EMEA.

**Media Vault**

The tic operates a Digital Asset Management (DAM) system to provide SMEs with the infrastructure to create, store, and sell their digital video, music, sound, illustrations etc. The creative industries cluster in the West Midlands will use the DAM to power their growth as new businesses start up without having to make a huge investment in technology. The tic's digital TV studio will also be used by local enterprises to create content for storage on the DAM and for sale over broadband links set up by our partner, BT.

**Centre for Information Research (CIRT)**

High quality research and consultancy in the fields of librarianship and information research.

**Intelligent Systems & Information Strategy (ISIS)**

ISIS aims to improve methods for the planning and development of intelligent systems to add value to organisations.