

Collaboration: Key to Success in a Changing World

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Abstract

In this era of global economic competitiveness, our society's success in creating wealth and new jobs, as well as in meeting its citizens' needs, is strongly tied to our technical community's ability to produce innovative technologies. We already possess the essential elements for generating these new technologies: talented engineers and scientists, world class research facilities, and a dynamic market-place that encourages innovation.

But too often these elements have failed to connect. There has not been sufficient interaction between the broad research base built by universities and Federal labs and the market-driven world of industry. As a result, our nation's vast array of expertise and technical resources is not utilized to its full potential.

Industry, universities, and government are learning new ways to collaborate to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities of a new era. OAI is a common ground where they can meet to begin their adventure.

OAI, a private, non-profit corporation, is a consortium of nine Ohio universities, NASA Lewis Research Center, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and technology oriented companies. OAI facilitates the development and operation of collaborative teams in research and development, graduate and continuing education, and the adaptation of advanced technology for industry. To date, more than thirty such collaborations involving NASA, the Air Force and NIST, more than a dozen universities, and more than two dozen companies have been successfully created in a wide range of technologies with applications in aerospace, manufacturing, and medical systems.

Key elements of success in these collaborations include joint ownership among the industry, university, and government sectors; effective communication among geographically distributed teams; a spirit of shared resources: people, facilities, and funding; openness to intellectual input from anywhere; low overhead costs; and a strong market focus.

As the Federal Government moves toward reinventing itself, technology collaborations in which the Federal participants are more colleague and less customer, appear an attractive concept. Some of the lessons learned in building such collaborations in the past decade will be invaluable in helping to shape the national technology agenda in the future.

