Finding new ways through the Valley of Death that separates university research and commercial use continues to stymie the nation’s universities, innovation policy makers, and regional economic development people. The Innovation Acceleration Partnership (IAP) Program’s goals are to overcome this shortfall by:

1. Developing life science entrepreneurs and university commercialization workers
2. Reducing roadblocks that discourage faculty commercialization
3. Finding new innovation models for university commercialization
4. Moving science from bench to market, benefiting patients
5. Enhancing the culture of university and regional innovation

Washington University IAP Fellows support faculty scientists by serving as their commercialization collaborator. They identify therapeutic, diagnostic, or other technologies and then offer to become a researcher’s commercialization partner and possibly venture co-founder. They are supported by a large mentor group of technology transfer, industry experts, and community. The main goal of their work is to reach milestones leading to early stage commercial funding.

Program Activities:
Washington University in St. Louis

I. Recruit Fellows
II. Develop Commercialization Evaluation Tools
III. Form Mentor Support Network
IV. Evaluate Technologies
V. Form Researcher Partnerships
VI. Decide Upon Commercialization Plan
VII. Identify Commercialization Constraints
VIII. Propose New Accelerator Models for Innovation and Commercialization
IX. Obtain Funding for Accelerator Models

Partners:
1. Incubators:
   - Center for Emerging Technology
   - NIDUS Center
   - IT Enterprises
2. University:
   - Office of Technology Management (OTM)
   - Skandalaris Center for Entrepreneurial Studies
   - Hope Center
   - Department of Radiation and Oncology
   - Siteman Cancer Center
3. Investors:
   - BioGenerator
   - Prolog Ventures
   - River Vest Ventures
   - Arch Angel Investor Network
   - Oakwood Medical Investors
   - Triathlon Medical Ventures
4. Industry:
   - Pfizer, Inc
   - Sigma-Aldrich Corporation
   - Monsanto Company
   - Coviden
   - Johnson and Johnson
5. Service Providers:
   - Lawyers
   - Accountants
   - Life Science Consultants
6. Economic Development:
   - Regional Commerce and Growth Association
   - Plant and Life Sciences Coalition

Top Contributions:
1. Training Fellows to be catalysts for commercialization
2. Confirming researcher interest in entrepreneur partners
3. Cataloging the time, cost, and motivation roadblocks constraining researcher commercialization
4. Forming new companies
5. Considering accelerator models that increase innovation momentum

Top Challenges:
1. Increasing researchers’ entrepreneurial intention
2. Funding patents and proof of concept experiments
3. Reducing time and costs that delay acting on “early”, Valley of Death Discoveries
4. Testing the value of quick entrepreneurial action vs. slower “Pick Winner” analysis
5. Funding and sustaining accelerator models

Key Attributes of our Innovation Ecosystem:

Questioning & Curiosity:
1. Why do researchers forego commercialization?
2. What can we do to increase researchers’ willingness to commercialize?
3. How do we make sure that commercialization activities do not damage scientific discovery and integrity?
4. What needs to change to cause large increases in university commercialization productivity?

Risk Taking:
1. Attempting speculative, quick new company formation
2. Inviting Fellows to be first time entrepreneur co-founders
3. Using a large, outside mentor group to accelerate decisions and advise fellows
4. Inviting fast action and quick discovery uncovering failure or success

Openness:
1. Engage community and industry partners as mentors and advisors
2. Openly collaborate and share-Mizzou and Wash U
3. Involve broad cross section of interest groups, including technology transfer, investors, researchers, centers, industry

Collaboration Across Fields:
1. Connect Business (commercialization) to University (scientific discovery and patient care)
2. Connect researchers to Fellows that wish to commercialize very early university discoveries
3. Compare different innovation models
   - Device innovation model (BioDesign Fellows-Clinical surgeons)
   - Therapeutic and diagnostic innovation model (IAP Fellows-Basic Science researchers)
4. Engage a large (38) diverse mentor pool

Placing Partners in “New Environments” & “Playgrounds”:
1. Monthly mentor meetings
2. Inter-University innovation discussions
3. Core team innovation discussions
   - Office of Technology Management
   - BioGenerator Seed Fund
   - Skandalaris Center for Entrepreneurial Studies

Leading/Inspiring for Surprising or Unexpected Results:
1. Many young scientists have high entrepreneurial intention, interest, and motivation and are interested in being Entrepreneurs
2. First time Fellow Entrepreneurs can be a catalyst that increases commercialization speed and activity
3. Numerous structural, resource, and policy constraints dampen enthusiasm and university commercialization productivity
4. Establishing a rich innovation environment takes time, is rate limited by people, and has no "quick fixes"
5. Innovation models need to consider local idiosyncrasies and personalities
6. Universities would benefit from both BioDesign and IAP Fellow type programs