An Open Forum was held on Wednesday, October 3, 2012 in the Fowler Athletic Center’s Athletic Auditorium. Participants included members of the Economic Development Working Group, Steering Committee and the community. Dean Stanley Maloy from the College of Sciences and Vice President Stephen Welter from Research and Graduate Affairs gave opening remarks, including an overview of the Strategic Plan, clarification of the Economic Development Working Group’s charge from the Community Engagement Task Force Group, and the goal of the Open Forum to engage the community in conversations related to the following two charges:

1) The transfer of technology from universities to private businesses through licensing agreements fosters economic development. How can we improve our processes and the support we provide for technology development and technology transfer?

2) In addition to transferring technology, the university is supporting business development through multiple centers (i.e., the Zahn Center, the Entrepreneurial Management Center). How can we support the development of these centers and ensure that the missions and operational methods of these entities are complementary and mutually supportive to the development of small businesses?

In summary, the Economic Development Working Group’s charge is to develop ideas that promote an entrepreneurial spirit and community interactions with a goal of financial stabilization. Providing community engagement opportunities will enhance the community’s support to the university. New financial resources can assist to maintain and ensure the university’s sustainability and growth. The group discussed the following topics:

- There is a need for the University to become more entrepreneurial driven, using expertise to grow in many areas on campus. Entrepreneurial efforts should be valued and promoted. Economic development = tech transfer + work force. We need to think more like a business than state-supported academics in these areas.
• Examples were given on how technology can support small businesses. An example of a program related to alcohol prevention was cited as a successful program which involved fraternities/sororities on campus that made pledges related to alcohol prevention. This program brought in $700,000 in revenue to Student Support Services which enabled them to keep services at current levels even during budget reductions. Ideas of this nature not only can have an effect on the community, they can also bring money in to the university to help ensure services. However, it was noted that not all intellectual property brings in substantial resources, so it is important to also evaluate the impact on the community or campus when evaluating the benefit of intellectual property.

• Questions were raised as to how SDSU compares to other local universities. As this discussion developed it was noted that the Economic Development Working Group should focus ideas on ensuring that faculty, staff, and students receive more information on the tech transfer process and how the results of successful transfers have and can affect the university. It was noted that not all in attendance were aware of the process and the effects that are in place today from successful ideas.

• More communication is needed with faculty, staff and students on how ideas are turned into intellectual property by the University. Overall the campus does not have a clear understanding of the process in place and the community needs to better understand how tech transfers work with our university. Currently in place, students can own intellectual property unless they have used university support.

• More clarification is needed for faculty regarding their ability to earn additional overload beyond their service to the University. A better understanding of the new language in the Faculty contract regarding consultation should be clarified and disbursed.

• Tech transfer is an area which has grown and developed over time and was previously not emphasized. Broad communication is needed for Faculty, Staff and students to learn about these opportunities. A university-wide training on how to take advantage of intellectual property would be valuable.

• An online resource containing detailed information on where to go for assistance and mentoring on intellectual property would be useful.

• Incubators of start-up companies can have many benefits for the university, including education, research, and financial benefits. Considerable investment is required to provide the best opportunities for success of incubator. In addition, it is important to clarify the importance of incubators to the university community.

• Can the use of student cards be used for outside services? This might promote economic development of nearby businesses.

• Ensuring the tech transfer process is ‘user friendly’ would encourage developers to use campus resources, and provide increased revenue to the university. What can be done to
make the process easier from end-to-end, to ramp up research, and to identify new grant opportunities.

- It might be useful to put out a survey to faculty on how they perceive the university’s involvement in tech transfer, from accessibility to promotion to licensing?
- Marketing of the university to the community is very important because the community is a critical source of financial support, both in real time and in the long term.
- We might benefit from more involvement in the government’s R5 program. Foreign investment of $500,000 to centers that provide employment to at least 15 people can ensure foreign investor receives a green card. Investors can collaborate in the same center/company.
- Can outside companies use resources on campus. If so, how do we communicate services on campus to community? Can we turn this into a source of revenue?
- Mike Rondelli will be sending documentation regarding institutes that have been successful in technology transfer, and this information will be posted as soon as it is received.

WRITTEN SUGGESTIONS FROM HANDOUTS:

- Emphasize increasing grant acquisition
- PhD programs can be revenue generators when they are leveraged to support research and development
- Is faculty release time available to compensate for additional work associated with tech transfer?
- Increase student and faculty awareness of IP
- Access to resources/experience for biz startup
- Express licensing
- Market technology services available
- Offer biotech training courses through the College of Extended Studies. (e.g. courses on technologies like FACS, etc.)
- Identify non-NIH funding sources for biomedical research
- Develop L3 high-impact synergistic programs to target funding or philanthropy
- Partner with industry to be a service provider
- How can we make the community aware of available for-hire resources?
- Link the Zahn Center, Entrepreneurial Management Center, and Technology Transfer Office