

# THE PLAIN DEALER

## A tech-transfer success story

Friday, July 28, 2006

Amid the fiscal gloom that characterized much of the spring, Case Western Reserve University had one office posting record returns.

The institution's technology transfer office, energized since the arrival of Mark Coticchia in 2001, this year continued its impressive results in categories relating to new inventions, licenses and even start-up companies.

Just five years ago, the university reaped only \$2 million from its work to bring new discoveries to market. In this fiscal year (from July 1, 2005 through June 30) that figure totaled \$10.8 million. Researchers this year filed a record 174 invention disclosures - early paperwork necessary to protect intellectual property that might someday lead to products - nearly triple the number in fiscal 2001. And the transactions - essentially licensing and other kinds of agreements - climbed from six in 2001 to 37 in 2006. Over time, these individual statistics have the potential to draw significant new investment, and jobs, to a region badly in need of both.

This data - along with the four new start-up companies launched in 2006 - reveal an institution whose faculty increasingly recognize the value of translating its work into measures that directly impact the public. Indeed, Coticchia considers such practical applications a part of researchers' duty; much of their work, after all, is supported through federal grants.

The process of educating researchers about both the rules and logistics of commercializing research at Case requires broad efforts by an office of more than a dozen highly educated staff. In the wake of well-publicized national controversies regarding potential conflicts of interest in the development of pharmaceuticals and medical devices, the office also fields questions regarding appropriate researcher conduct. As welcome as new money and companies can be, they cannot come at the expense of ethical misconduct among the faculty - or worse, poorly considered clinical trials that put participants at risk.

Cuts in federal funding for medical research will make it harder for Coticchia and his colleagues to maintain recent growth, but the office at least can point to increases in general science dollars as a possible cushion. Regardless, the team has shown the value of the university's investment in this office - not only for Case, but also for the community at large.