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The Elements of Industry Engagement

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Industry engagement offers alternative sources of applied research funding. Because industry and the private sector are culturally-different to both government and the tertiary sector, the challenge is to sell the need for the high investment cost of applied research to deliver the outcome needed by industry within a prescribed framework and time limit. Academic freedom is constrained in the private sector platform by issues of risk from exposure to perceived negative outcomes or liability from the public via the media. Contractual arrangements usually require a defined completion time and a lag time in the release of findings deemed to be sensitive to industry. In extreme situations public release of findings may never be allowed by industry and is a worse-case risk of undertaking this kind of research. The academic freedom of the university environment is offset by research that can be undertaken with industry problems that may allow for extensive data collections at a level of detail beyond what is generally possible with limited resources in the tertiary sector. Against a seemingly daunting task of securing funding from industry is the opportunity to engage in frontier research with industry that can involve fundamental study with sophisticated techniques such as the array of synchrotron radiation-induced spectroscopies now available at the Australian Synchrotron to give explanations at molecular levels in both biotic and abiotic media. Above all else time is required for CEOs to have sufficient trust in the research providers and confidence to approve embarking on innovative research.

Keywords

Industry engagement risks opportunities

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