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NEWS RELEASE

Academic research needs more business input

Canada must improve commercial prospects for university-developed technologies

Montreal – Canada invests large sums of money in academic research, but the fruits of these investments are not reflected in more industrial innovation and improved productivity, according to a new study from the Institute for Research on Public Policy.

In the study, “Connecting the Dots between University Research and Industrial Innovation,” author Jorge Niosi (Université du Québec à Montréal) argues that while academic researchers are primarily motivated to produce original research and to provide quality education, they should nevertheless capitalize on the market knowledge of the business community as they develop their research agendas. A demand-pull approach, by which businesses seek out and cultivate university-developed technologies, would promote much more private-sector innovation than would simply injecting more money into academic research, according to Niosi, who points to several US initiatives that have proven effective.

“Policy-makers in Canada should focus on a new approach that would encourage businesses to participate more directly in research funding decisions that impinge on university research directions, without going so far as to dictate their specifics,” says Niosi. “It’s the most effective way to support the commercialization process.”

For the last 20 years Canada’s productivity record has been sluggish, according to Niosi, who cites the slow adoption of advanced technologies by small and medium-sized businesses as a likely cause.

“A coordinated program to increase the demand for innovative technology among these firms and linking them to frontier academic research will certainly have an impact on their productivity,” Niosi says, “allowing them to become the global technology powerhouses of tomorrow.”

“Connecting the Dots between University Research and Industrial Innovation,” by Jorge Niosi, with commentaries by Indira V. Samarasekera and Ilse Treurnicht, can be downloaded free of charge from www.irpp.org.

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