Cross Campus Collaboration: The Case of the Rice Alliance for Technology and Entrepreneurship

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Mission of the Alliance

Create the authoritative initiative at Rice to:

• Coordinate a forum for exchange among the science, engineering, and entrepreneurship communities.

• Develop and actively facilitate team-based approaches for the study of and creation of new entrepreneurial business concepts, new jobs, and new sources of wealth for Rice University and the U.S. economy.

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Rice Alliance as Catalyst

Rice faculty and administration (e.g., Science, Engineering, Management and others)

Rice alumni

Current students (Science, Engineering, and Management)

Houston’s Texas Medical Center (e.g., M.D. Anderson, Baylor, UT Health Sciences Center)

Members of business community (e.g., entrepreneurs and large tech corporations)

Venture capital and investment community

Houston area entrepreneurship organizations (e.g., Houston Technology Center, Texas eComm, MIT Enterprise Forum, TechExecs TiE, Texchange, et al.)

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Alliance Forum Events

• All Alliance events are open to the public and promote interaction among business persons, technologists, and investors.

• Entrepreneurs who present at Forum events get access to a "talent pool" of potential collaborators, mentors, and investors.

• Forum events welcome involvement of individuals from large technology companies as well as service providers such as attorneys, accountants, and consultants.
Alliance Milestones

• The Alliance has assisted in the launch of >100 new technology businesses during first three years of operation: Ranging from the manufacturing of single-wall carbon nanotubes to selling women’s fashions via the internet.

• Alliance-affiliated companies have raised over $40 million.

• We have hosted over 6,500 attendees at Rice Alliance events.

• Our email “Digest” is received by 5,000 persons.
Main Points: Organizational Design of the Rice Alliance

- Early involvement of stakeholders (faculty, investors, alumni, et al.).
- Navigating the University’s “political landscape.”
- Governance of the Alliance.
Alliance Steering Council: 23 members

- 35% professors from Graduate School of Management.
- 17% professors from the School of Engineering/School of Natural Sciences.
- 13% members of the local investment community.
- 13% alumni.
- 13% university staff members (industry relations, alumni relations, placement center).
- Directors of Tech Transfer and MIT Ent. Forum.
Navigating the University
“Political Landscape”

- Involve relevant stakeholders from the very beginning.
- Use a tenured professor as the primary messenger.
- Make initial proposal to appropriate Deans.
- By-pass potential “nay-sayers” (e.g., middle or upper level university administrators).
- Secure final approval from university President.
Governance of the Rice Alliance

University President

Board of Governors: Deans of Engineering, Management, Natural Sciences, and Graduate Studies

External Advisory Board: Venture Capitalists, Technology Entrepreneurs, and Trustees

Director

Steering Council
Final Take-Away Points

• Be inclusive rather than exclusive with faculty colleagues. There’s plenty of credit to go around!

• The political landscape is dynamic, not static. As your champions, cultivate leading faculty members outside your academic unit, deans, and university trustees. Maintain these relationships.

• www.alliance.rice.edu