FAMU Puts Laser Focus on Innovation and Technology Transfer

Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) is putting a laser focus on fostering a culture of innovation and discovery.

Recently, Vice President for Research Timothy Moore, Ph.D., appointed patent licensing specialist Reis D. Alsberry, J.D., as the director of FAMU’s Office of Technology Transfer. Since coming on board in August, Alsberry has been an active participant in the development of new partnerships that will assist FAMU faculty, staff, and students with their entrepreneurial pursuits as well as bringing their innovations and inventions to market.

Reis Alsberry has also been working closely with Dr. Moore as a key contributor to the growing partnership between FAMU and Domi Station, an incubator organization designed to accelerate the growth and success of early-stage companies and innovations through an array of business support resources and services. “We are very excited that Mr. Alsberry joined the Division of Research family,” Moore said. “His diverse skill set in intellectual property and export control will help us move our diverse patent portfolio to the marketplace. Licensing and commercialization is a major focus, and he will facilitate that cause.”

Under the leadership of Alsberry, Moore, and the School of Business and Industry (SBI), FAMU recently teamed up with Domi Station to host the “The FAMU App Challenge,” a 72-hour, startup challenge for small student teams to build a scalable mobile application and business model quickly. The challenge kicked off yesterday. Winners will receive a $2,500 cash prize and an opportunity to present at the SBI Global Leadership Conference at Disney World in Orlando, November 19-21, 2015.

Alsberry has also been instrumental in the launch of a new seven-week Technology Commercialization Accelerator Program (TCAP) that teaches faculty, postdoctoral scholars, and student researchers how to test their ideas, understand customer demand, examine competition, and develop partnerships to transition their ideas into profitable ventures.

The program, which is modeled after FAMU’s success as the first place winner of the National Science Foundation Innovation Corps (I-Corps), is being led by the Entrepreneurs in Residence (EIRs) at the FAMU-FSU College of Engineering, the Florida Institute for the Commercialization of Public Research, Domi Station, FAMU’s Technology Transfer Office, and local entrepreneurs.

Selected participants have formed three-person teams that consist of an entrepreneurial lead, principal investigator, and a business mentor. Each FAMU team will receive a grant of up to $3,000 from the Division of Research to help with the costs of traveling to visit customers, creating prototypes, and other direct costs of participation. The intensive program requires team members to commit 10-15 hours per week, which will include a three-hour class each week, out of office customer interviews, constructing a business model canvas, and various other assignments. The program runs through December.

In addition to his involvement with the TCAP, Alsberry has also been hard at work in providing intellectual property law and patent prosecution expertise to the FAMU community. “As the director of the Office of Technology Transfer I handle interviewing inventors to determine effective patent strategies, and communicating with inventors, attorneys, faculty, and staff to ensure FAMU can successfully implement chosen technologies and scientific innovations in the marketplace,” Alsberry said.

Prior to joining the FAMU Division of Research staff, Alsberry served as the intellectual property and export control manager in the Office of Research at Old Dominion University. He obtained his Juris Doctorate from the University of Richmond, School of Law in 2003. Alsberry’s extensive STEM background dates back to his undergraduate studies at the University of Virginia, where he received his bachelor’s degree in civil engineering in 1998. For more information on the Office of Technology Transfer or the Technology Commercialization Accelerator Program, call 850-412-7232.