

Research Freedom to University Scholars

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Research Freedom to University Scholars: Externalities that Constrain Research

Abstract

It has been claimed that an essential aspect of the modern university is the freedom for university faculty members is the tenure system that acts as a guarantee for faculty members to engage in research unfettered by external pressures. However, there are changes in the research environment that can be seen as restraints on the scholar's ability to operate unrestrained in their research areas. This paper considers two of such influences.

First, in recent years, particularly in Science and Engineering, there has been growing pressure from university administrations for their faculty to engage in technology transfer initiatives. Often this is expressed in faculty-institution agreements that at a minimum require faculty to disclose to their institutions any work that may be patentable and restrain from publication until either the institution thinks that it is not worthwhile or a patent is filed. A second restraint on research may be patents and material transfer agreements that they are obliged to take heed of when they are engaging in cutting edge research. In today's research environments, particularly in disciplines that involve biological materials, it is inevitable that these issues need to be addressed by researchers.

The demand for technology transfer by institutions, and pressures to abide by, and file for, patents may be a negative influence the activities of researchers.

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