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New Ranking Compares Innovation Impact Among U.S. Universities and Research Institutions

Report from the George W. Bush Institute and Opus Faveo Innovation Development Connects Innovation Activities to Economic Growth and Prosperity, Provides Recommendations for Institutions and Policymakers

DALLAS – Today, the George W. Bush Institute and Opus Faveo Innovation Development released a first-of-its-kind [set of rankings](#) measuring the impact universities and research institutions have on the U.S. economy and society based on their innovation.

Major research institutions are at the center of efforts to understand and combat COVID-19. Now more than ever, institutions that build competitive research operations around life science, biotechnology, and other vital STEM fields are an essential driver of America’s economic growth and pandemic recovery. “The Innovation Impact of U.S. Universities and Research Institutions” [report](#) can be a helpful tool for policymakers, university leaders, and business leaders on how they can leverage these contributions to advance their communities.

“Universities play an important role in fostering innovation in communities across the country, and that innovation drives economic growth and rising levels of prosperity,” said J.H. Cullum Clark, Director of the Bush Institute-SMU Economic Growth Initiative and co-author of the report. “These findings are especially critical as universities re-evaluate their priorities in a difficult environment, and as policymakers consider the role that higher education and research can play in a post-COVID economic recovery.”

The Innovation Impact Index differentiates itself by measuring productivity in turning research spending into overall innovation output.

“Our research demonstrates that innovation impact productivity is not necessarily tied to the biggest or best-known schools,” said Christian Blackwell, co-author and Managing Director of

Opus Faveo Venture Development. “By focusing on productivity, even smaller universities can have a large impact. Moreover, institutions of all sizes could achieve very significant increases in impact by moving towards the productivity levels of high-performing peers.”

The report advises universities to prioritize research, hire the best global talent, build efficient and productive technology transfer operations, and instill a strong culture of innovation and entrepreneurship. The report also calls on universities to engage more with the surrounding business community but cautions against over-reliance on industry research funding, which appears to be less highly correlated with innovation impact than other factors.

For policy makers, the report calls for increased public-sector support for university research and technology transfer; improved understanding of how institutions vary in their innovation impact productivity; increased focus on attracting and developing scientific and technical talent; and investment in integrated physical spaces that connect researchers with entrepreneurs, investors, and other potential nonacademic partners.

The following are the top 10 universities and systems as ranked for overall innovation impact:

1. University of California System
2. University of Texas System
3. Massachusetts Institute of Technology
4. University of Washington
5. University of Michigan
6. University of Florida
7. Columbia University
8. University of Minnesota
9. Stanford University
10. University of Pennsylvania

In ranking institutions for innovation impact productivity, the authors grouped the universities by size and included separate groupings for medical schools and for institutions focused purely on research. The following are the top five institutions in each group as ranked for innovation impact productivity:

Larger Research Universities:

1. University of Florida
2. University of Utah
3. California Institute of Technology
4. University of Chicago
5. North Carolina State University

Mid-Sized Research Universities:

1. Drexel University
2. University of New Mexico

3. Princeton University
4. Carnegie Mellon University
5. University of Central Florida

Smaller Research Universities:

1. Brigham Young University
2. University of Wisconsin System
3. Northern Illinois University
4. Duquesne University
5. Creighton University

Pure Medical Schools:

1. University of North Texas Health Science Center
2. Georgia Health Sciences University
3. Medical University of South Carolina
4. Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research
5. Baylor College of Medicine

Pure Research/Healthcare Institutions:

1. Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory
2. Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research
3. Jackson Laboratory
4. Hospital for Special Surgery
5. The Winstar Institution

The complete report and rankings can be downloaded at
www.bushcenter.org/universityinnovation

About the George W. Bush Institute: Housed within the George W. Bush Presidential Center, the George W. Bush Institute is an action-oriented, nonpartisan, policy organization with the mission of developing leaders, advancing policy, and taking action to solve today's most pressing challenges. Through three Impact Centers — Domestic Excellence, Global Leadership, and an Engagement Agenda — the Bush Institute delivers measurable results that save and improve lives. To learn more, visit www.BushCenter.org.

About Opus Faveo Innovation Development LLC: Opus Faveo Innovation Development is an innovation strategy and venture development firm. Through its Institutional and Corporate Innovation strategy practice, the firm provides actionable solutions to leadership in academia, government and the private sector, increasing innovation impact through stakeholder engagement, rigorous analysis, and effective communication and outreach programs. To learn more, visit www.Opus-Faveo.com/institutional-corporate-innovation.

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