IDEA START Podcast
Season 1 | Episode 5

Guest: Loren Oschipok, Director of Partnerships, Knowledge Mobilization & Innovation (PKMI) office at the University of Manitoba.
Title: Navigating Intellectual Property & Innovation Protection with Loren Oschipok

Note: Vocalizations such as 'um' and 'ah' have been removed from this transcript for clarity.

Introductory Montage

Co-created with The Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, the IDEA START Podcast explores all things creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. Move your ideas to impact with the University of Manitoba community.

Introduction

JANINE
Welcome to the Idea Start podcast. Today we are joined by our colleague and our friend Loren Oschipok. He's the Director of Partnerships, Knowledge Mobilization and Innovation here at the University of Manitoba. And we're going to explore intellectual property. Let's start the conversation.
Loren, thank you so much for joining us today on the Idea Start podcast. We are really excited to have you today.
Welcome to our studio. And I think we're really looking forward to learning about this topic of intellectual property with you, because, in the entrepreneurial journey, we want to be sure that we're protecting our ideas and potential businesses and the creativity that we've put into our initiatives. So we're excited to have you.

LOREN
Thank you.

RAJEEV
I'm really happy to be here and it's finally happening. We have been talking about this and it's good to have you.

LOREN
Yes, exactly. Great. I'm happy to be here.

Main Interview

JANINE
Let's start with a little bit about you. Tell us a bit about yourself. How did you land up in this role.

LOREN
In the field of tech transfer, academic tech transfer.
I ended up in this role in a way that a lot of people that work for university innovation offices and technology transfer offices do. I was originally a graduate student, so I have a PhD in Neuroscience from the University of British Columbia. When I was doing my PhD, I was focused I was going to be a faculty member. I was going to work at a university. I was going to have my own lab. And by the time I hit, my postdoc, my postdoc at the University of Toronto for a couple of years, I started to realize that maybe that academic stream and the academic research stream wasn't for me. But I didn't, like many people, many graduate students that come out of their training programs, I really didn't know what I wanted to do. I didn't know if I wanted to go into industry. I really, actually loved academic research. I just didn't see myself being a faculty member and running a lab. So I ultimately I ended up, work going back to UBC and working as a lab manager for a researcher who was very innovative. He was very engaged with, local, industry and research communities. He did a lot of research collaborations and filed patent applications. And that was about the time that I started to think to myself that what I really liked about research was this idea of, of knowledge, translation of moving technologies and innovations from the academic sphere, into the community. And so I was lucky enough to be involved in a few, research collaborations with, industry partners in
And from there was a job that opened up at, UBC Technology Transfer Office, and I threw my name in the hat and was lucky enough to be hired. And, sort of ten years later, here I am now in University of Manitoba.

JANINE
Okay, fantastic. Well, we're happy to have you.

RAJEEV
And I'm glad you found something you like doing now.

LOREN
I did not like doing the experiments, 5 or 6 or 7 times. But, what I really liked about research is, the problem solving. I was always most excited when, there was almost a problem with an experiment, and we had to, try and figure out a solution, movement of intellectual property out of the universities and into communities or into society in some ways, it's the same thing.

There's some challenges that go with that. Sometimes it's not very straightforward. And so, figuring out how to do that, is something that was of real interest to me.

RAJEEV
Okay. That's interesting. That's interesting how you put that. And I think that makes a lot of sense.

LOREN
Yes it does.

JANINE
So I'm intrigued Loren, because when you said your introduction, you use the phrase technology transfer. And now I want to ask you about I think you might have the longest title in the university. Right. Like you, the director of Partnerships, Knowledge Mobilization and Innovation.

LOREN
Yeah. Okay.

JANINE
Does it fit on your business card?

LOREN
It's a joke that we have is, every few years, the mandate of the office expands the name of the office expands. Originally, we were known as a technology transfer office. There's a lot of universities, that's the name of an office like ours. In technology transfer, just, basically refers to what I was mentioning earlier, which is that movement of technology, movement ideas and innovations out of the academic research space.
But, as the universities have, have sort of continued to move forward as, things have changed, our focus has changed on not just licensing technologies into established companies, but, our office is also focused on how can we support, the researchers here and that's faculty, staff and students who are interested in becoming involved in their innovations after they leave the university, either through, collaborating with a company or a research partner that might be able to take it on and move it from a really cool academic finding to, commercial product, or even an inventor who is interested in becoming an entrepreneur and taking that that idea, taking the, innovation or the research project out of the academic environment into the community and build a business around it. So, that's why our name, as has gotten a lot longer, because we're involved in partnerships, forging those partnerships between industry and academia. But

knowledge mobilization, I think is the key. It's that movement of ideas out of the university and into the community.

RAJEEV
Yeah. That's great. So, partnerships, right. That's the first ‘P’ of the PKMI.

LOREN
Yes.

RAJEEV
And how does that work? I mean, how does your office actually forge these partnerships? And what does this mean to our researchers and our community.

LOREN
So, the main focus that we have when it comes to partnerships is, finding, industry partners or finding companies that may have the interest and the resources to move a researcher, an idea or an invention into a commercial product. Because often the things that we do here at the university, while they are, they're academically very important, from a commercial perspective, they're still very, very early. So there's a lot of money, there's a lot of research and development that still needs to go into moving a lot of ideas, into something or developing them into something that could be a commercial product. And so, that is a big part of what we do at the partnerships office is that, when somebody within the university, like I said, a faculty, staff or student comes to us and they have, a really cool innovation, something that they're interested in exploring, how we could leverage it and move it out of the university. We evaluate it. We look to see if it's something that the market, is even interested in. And then a big component of it is, is the marketing side of it. We will go out and we will actively engage with, investors, angel investors, with VCs, with established companies, with potential founders, that are interested in building a company around the idea, to build it, in essence, a partnership, to move that technology forward.

RAJEEV
So it cannot be shooting in the dark. You have to, look at every case and then see what partnerships make sense.

LOREN
Yeah, exactly. Exactly. The reality is, is that sometimes, something that comes into the office is just a really good academic, research finding that doesn't diminish the value of it. But there may not be a commercial case for it. There may not be a market for it. And so that is one of the

things that we look at is that, is there a need for, what is coming to the office to be able to, move into the community.

RAJEEV
So do you have any examples that you can give us of how these partnerships have been done in the past?

LOREN
The most part, and by far the most common is that we when we are talking to a company about commercializing an idea or taking an idea out of the university, we're looking at doing what's called a license agreement. And a license really is at its core, it's just, series of terms and an agreement made between the researchers, the university and a company that outlines how that company can use your idea. How they can develop it? What is their responsibility? What are our responsibilities, to moving this product to market? There's a number of terms that that are very common. We can have a negotiation on whether or not we're going to license it to only a single company exclusively or to multiple companies. It's a non-exclusive license. You know, what is the requirement of the company to put R&D money & often, license agreements out of, there's a conversation about whether or not the company is willing to continue to fund research that happens here on campus. Support graduate students, support for the development of that technology, because, like I said, often, when they come into the office, they're very early stage and there's more things that need to be done.
And then sometimes, but not all the time, there is a conversation about what happens if this is a commercial success and there's revenues that come into the company, because, the university and the office has a mandate that if there's something that's been invented here that is commercially successful, there's an obligation and there's an expectation that not only the university inventors, but the university might be able to share in those in the rewards that come from a successful commercialization.
But, that's not always the case. License agreements come in all shapes and sizes. Sometimes when we license a technology or we license something out of, university research, there's not a financial case for it. Sometimes it's a social innovation. Sometimes it's something that is really important to a community, or to, a group of people where we're not going to sell it. We're not going to make money off of the technology. We're not going to make some money off of this innovation. But it's still really important to have an agreement in place that ensures that the rights and obligations on both sides are still met. And so there might not be a dollar value to it, but, it's just as important to have that conversation, have that agreement in place.

RAJEEV
That's so important. You're right. And if you are a social innovator, you must consider walking into PKMI and talking to Loren and their team, because it's important, even if there's no immediate commercial value, it's important to have that agreement and safeguard the intellectual property.

LOREN
One of the things that we'd like to try and avoid is the chance that somebody takes your innovation and removes your name from it, changes it, and does something with it that you didn't anticipate and that you weren't interested in.

JANINE
Or that's inaccurate.

LOREN
Or that's inaccurate. So, there are times where we have in those agreements that, you know, if the receptor of that innovation, is using it and they're going to make changes, they have to come back to the university inventors and say, hey look, we want to make an improvement. We want to tweak it in this way. Are you okay with that? We don't want to have something that, has our name on it, university's name, and those inventors' names on it. And it gets changed in a way that reduces its, its impact, because, it's almost like a game of telephone. So, if that happens, it can go to 2 or 3 or 4 people down the road, and suddenly someone's calling the university or someone's calling the inventors and saying, hey look, you know, why did you put this out here? This is wrong. And the reality is, it's been changed so many times down the road that it's not doing what its initial intention was. So, we want to put agreements in place that says, if we're for example, we're licensing something like a questionnaire to a health authority or to a hospital. Of course we want to be able to have that disseminated broadly, and we want to have hospitals that need it, to have access to it.
But we don't want the first hospital we license it to, to make 5 or 6 changes to it and then, share it out. We want everyone to come back to us, for the original idea, the original innovation. It's about protecting your, your input, and it's about protecting, the work that you've done and ensuring that, you're recognized for it so that you get the recognition that you deserve. If you've come up with something that has it's very impactful and induces change, we want to make sure your name doesn't end up getting taken off of it. So, you know, in those cases, there's license agreements or there's letter agreements that are put in place. Again, there might not be a dollar value to it.
It might not be something that makes money, but it's still, the agreement allows you to protect your input and protect what you've done and have a say in it going forward.

JANINE
Yeah. Okay. That was new for me, Lauren. Thank you. That was really helpful.

RAJEEV
In fact, you know, I think what you have just laid out is the process of, how somebody, when they walk into your office, how that gets converted to an actual IP.And that's very fascinating. And it seems there are so many different things that you have to look at. Right? It's not straightforward. And which is why I think it's important that our researchers and social innovators understand that, if they're trying to do this by themselves, you know, it's not such an easy path. And, the expertise here involved, and not just you, right? You have a team.

LOREN
Yeah, I do, I do.

RAJEEV
So, can you tell us a bit about your team.

LOREN
So, I think we're about seven. I vote seven staff members now. Pretty soon it'll be nine. We're in the process of hiring a couple of people on our Lab2Market side. But yeah, we have a number of staff members at PKMI that, have been in research before. So, they have a PhD, they have been involved They have worked, in the trenches of academic research. And so they understand the challenges, that researchers have, both in, in developing and, going through research projects and then the challenges that have when you come up with an idea, what do you do? How do you how do you ensure that when you are interested in moving it forward, interested in moving it out of the university, you do it the right way? And that you feel like your wants and your needs are respected. So, we have two technology managers that work on the applied science side, and we have two technology managers that work on the life science side and the agricultural side. So, when somebody comes into the office and says, either I have an invention or even I have a question, I work in this particular field. What we do is we pair you with the technology manager who has the experience in that area, to ensure that, the conversation is as helpful as possible.

RAJEEV
And I've worked with the team, and, as IDEA we work very closely with PKMI. And I can tell you folks that, the PKMI tech transfer officers are some of the best people you could meet on campus. And, they, like Loren was saying, can really guide you, step by step on how to convert your, research into, patent or an IP. So that's, that's really helpful too.

JANINE
So Loren, with like quite a large team and lots of projects. I'm sure there's like various ways that you can measure the impact of your office. Like what are some of those ways. How do you how do you know if you're on the right track with this?

LOREN
Numbers and impact and metrics are what makes the world go round. And, our office plays a key role in moving technologies out of the university. So every year we do a deep dive on some of the metrics, on how many, faculty members, how many researchers have come in, how many new inventions or new ideas come into the office. So, I have the numbers that I have for 2023 because we're always about a year behind on our metrics is, we had 55 unique inventions come into the office from all across the university. And, for a university the size of University of Manitoba. That's quite good. So looking at some of the numbers of, say the, UofT's and the UBC's, we're really punching above our weight. We have a very innovative, research community here. And, on average, I think we have between 35 and 55, inventions that come into our office every year. It keeps us busy and, from there, we'll review those inventions will determine whether or not they need a patent. Sometimes you don't. Sometimes there's different types of IP protection, copyright, sometimes as a trademark. But we'll evaluate that technology. What we're looking for is, is it novel? Is there a market for it? How advanced is it? Is it something that is almost market ready or is going to need $40 million to, to make it to market? And, how novel is it? And, if it is a often if it's just a small change to something that's already out there, again, it's an interesting research project but, the industry and the market is not interested, but if it is a complete disrupter. So if it is, something that really changes the game, it really moves the needle. That's an exciting project, that we'd like to take on.

RAJEEV
That's great to know that we're punching above our weight. The perception is that we're lagging behind and we don't really come to know and this is great. Thanks for sharing that.

LOREN
Yeah, I'll say that, you know, I worked at three universities. Now I've worked at UBC, I've worked at U of T, and now I'm here at the University of Manitoba. And what I've learned during my time here is that the researchers at the University of Manitoba are every bit as innovative and every bit as skilled, as anywhere else that I've been in Canada.

JANINE
Fantastic! Love to hear that. So Loren, for some of our audience members who are like a little bit new to this topic, I wonder if we could just kind of like, go back to, like, the 30,000ft view because you've used, like, a lot of terms and like, if you could kind of walk us through like what

is intellectual property like and what are like the different categories and like just some way for the newbies to think about this topic.

LOREN
For sure. It's very common for, when you have somebody say, the phrase intellectual property that people will often think, well, it's something like a widget. It's a drug or it's a device or it's an object, and those things are intellectual property, but intellectual property is way more than that. So, under sort of a legal definition or a common definition, intellectual property is defined as a creation of the mind. So, it's not just an invention or a design. It is a unique piece of music. It's a poetry it is a unique design of some sort. All of those things are considered intellectual property. All of those things fall under, intellectual property law. And laws are slightly different, from country to country. But the take home is, that no matter what your intellectual property is, there are different mechanisms that exist to protect it. And that's part of one of the jobs of the partnerships office is when something comes is to say, what do we need to do in order to protect the inventors rights, when it comes to intellectual property.

JANINE
Okay. And so copyright, trademarks, patents, those are examples of how you protect.

LOREN
Exactly. Those are all examples of different ways that different types of intellectual property can, can be protected.

JANINE
Okay. So that's how you protect it. So earlier when you use words about like licensing for example, that's not about protecting anymore. That's now about like leveraging.

LOREN
Exactly.

JANINE
Is there anything other than licensing in kind of that categories or other ways.
I mean I guess like commercialization.

LOREN
In terms of commercialization. You can license something. You can, you can give it away freely, you can maintain your good point. Your, IP rights, and you can decide that, this is something that you want to share with the world. There's no obligation to, commercialize anything, at the university. If there's a new invention that comes out, there's no obligation for a university

researcher to say, I want to turn this into a commercial product. The partnerships office, doesn't review every single research program and, and then goes to the researcher or goes to the student and says, hey look, I think you have something in commercial value. It comes down to what, the researcher wants to do. And so for some researchers, they, are interested in that type of knowledge mobilization and type of moving their technologies out of their research labs. But for others, it's about knowledge generation, and it's about sharing the results of their research project. And, that is just as valuable to, for what the things that we do here.

RAJEEV
And that's still important that people like that come out and get their technology protected. And so because like you said earlier, we do not want that getting misused.

LOREN
Exactly. And, the other thing that we're often involved in with the partnerships office is that when a researcher comes to us or an industry partner comes to us and says, we want to do a research collaboration and, we want to we're not talking about licensing a technology, but we're interested in partnering together on a research project. That is something that there's agreements that that underlie those partnerships. And we work together with the university's contract office to, put those in place. But where the partnerships office becomes involved is that, there's often with, as part of these collaborations, the potential for intellectual property to arise for new innovations and new inventions to arise. And so one of our roles within PKMI is to work with the parties, with the researcher and the company to say, hey look, what does everyone want to do with this? What happens if we have something that that comes out that has potentially commercial value? Who will own that? Who will take the lead on that? What happens if we can't come to some sort of agreement on this? What if there's a dispute? Because, you know, the way I look at collaborations is that, it's very, I see all the time that there's the real excitement. It's really exciting to be able to do a great project, to be able to work with an industry partner. But sometimes we gloss over the ideas of what do we do if things go wrong, what do we do if suddenly there's misunderstandings on who owns what, or who brings in to what or who shares what? And so the PKMI sometimes can be a bit of a wet blanket. We're sometimes the ones who will say, hey look, this is great, but let's take a breath and say, you know what are we going to do if things start to go sideways? Because at the end of the day, the best research collaboration is one where at the end of it, everybody that was involved, thought it was a great experience and wants to do it again. Yeah. So if there's a collaboration where it gets to the end and you never want to work with the other person again because of these misunderstandings, it's a failure.

JANINE
Okay. So that pause at the beginning to make sure,, we get it right and we're all on the same page.

LOREN
Yeah, I use the term, rights and responsibilities. Everybody, that's part of a partnership that's working on a collaboration should understand both what their rights and their responsibilities are under it. So, the collaboration runs smoothly.

RAJEEV
Just, kind of extending on this thought, what I was thinking is if, let's say, researchers might have this in mind, right? When they, walk into PKMI or the tech transfer office, are you batting for the researchers or the university? Is the IP policy built in a way that will support me or not? Some of these thoughts, I'm sure, are run into the minds of people. Yeah. What are your thoughts on that?

LOREN
Yeah, we you know, we have a responsibility both to the university and to the researchers that that work here. And, it's sometimes it's surprising to say for people. But, we do also have a responsibility to the industry partners. It's a different responsibility. Maybe it's not at the same level. But we want to ensure that, when these partnerships, and when these collaborations are built that everybody like I said, understands their rights and responsibilities under those. But at its core, we're a service office. We're here to support the work and the research and the commercialization goals of university members, faculty, staff and students. And so that is our priority. And that's why our office exists.

JANINE
Okay. So I want to pick up on something you just said. I think it's the first time it's come up. But you said IP policy. So that might be something totally new for our audience to that the work you do, is guided by a policy. So can you share with us maybe like a couple of key features of that.

LOREN
I'll start by saying that, university IP policy is, very widely across the country. So they do break down into three sort of standard policies. We have universities that have what's known as an institutional owned policy. Under an institutional owned policy, the way that it's written is that any invention or innovation that comes out of the research at that university, the owner of it is the university is that institution. Other universities have policies that are, inventor owned. So, anything that comes out of the university is 100% owned by the inventor. The universities don't

have, a stake or a share in those technologies, in that IP. And then we have universities like the University of Manitoba, where it's, a jointly owned IP policy. And so what that means is that any innovation or invention that comes out of university research that uses university resources, is jointly owned by the inventors that were involved in that creation and the university as a whole. You know, one of the things that I will say that comes up often with questions is that, if I'm a university student and I've come up with a business idea, can I come into the partnerships office, does that mean that the university owns 50% of my idea? And the answer to that is no. It is, the university policy, applies to research that's done. It's typically it's research dollars can also be, but it can also mean research that's done using university resources. So if it's done in a university research lab, uses the university facilities, that could that IP that comes out of, out of that work would fall under the policy. But if you've come up with something on your own, but using what you've learned here at the university, the phrase is that if you've done it in your garage on the weekend, but you've used what you've learned at the university, the university policy doesn't apply to that. So that's your IP.

RAJEEV
Okay. So that's clear.

LOREN
That is clear. And you know we even though it doesn't fall under the university's IP policy, it doesn't mean that, university inventors can't reach out to my office to ask for help. So, we get conversations all the time, not only from the university, but from members of the community. There's limits on sometimes what we can do. We can't put necessarily put, financial resources into it. But if someone comes in with a question around intellectual property, intellectual property policies, where should I go? Who should I talk to for help? You know, we'll be there to help them.

RAJEEV
That's such an important piece of information. Right? That's really good. There are a lot of people who might have this in their head and not just walk in, when actually you are here to support. In fact, that's the elephant in the room, right? If I may, that a lot of people think that because there is a 50-50 and there's a share. Does that actually hamper the growth of commercialization of research in anyway?

LOREN
No, it depends again, on who you talk to. And it depends, again, with there being different IP policies across the country and universities.

RAJEEV
Is there any proof at all of this thing that? I think it in this way or that way actually impacts?

LOREN
No, I think every single IP policy has its pros and cons. I wouldn't say that a jointly owned IP policy is always the best solution. Just as, I wouldn't say that, inventor owned or an institution owned is, there are pluses and minuses to everything. If you read the university's intellectual property policy within the first paragraph, there is a phrase that says that the policy, reflects the fact that there's a collaborative and cooperative nature, that goes into the development of intellectual property at the University of Manitoba. And by that, that means that, both the inventors and the university are contributing expertise, and they're contributing resources and time and effort into the creation of new inventions. And so the policy reflects that. And the policy, I think, reflects the fact that, we're in a partnership for this to move it forward and the, way forward for success often is it's at the university has, it's contributing resources to it. Right. And, you know, we're involved in it. We're bringing our expertise, the technology transfer managers that work in my office, are well versed in working in research and with legal agreements and negotiating with industry partners. And so, the policy reflects that. And it also reflects the fact that, an academic innovation that sits on a shelf, is still a great academic innovation, but there's no commercial value to it. And so, the policy is incentivizing, commercialization and moving technologies out and allowing researchers and inventors to lean on our expertise. And often, lean on our funding. So, one of the things that the university provides is if there is IP protection that's needed, if there's patents that need to be filed or copyright, applications that need to be filed, the university's contribution under the policy is that that we pay those early pat costs.

JANINE
Oh, I see

LOREN
If we go and we try and commercialize, an invention and we're not successful, we can't find a receptor either a startup or an established company. The university doesn't go back to the inventors and say, hey look, now you owe us 50% of the patent costs, whatever those may be. The university says that's our contribution to this.

RAJEEV
That's one side that you normally don't look at, right? Yeah. Yeah.

LOREN
Yeah. So, the policy does allow because it's a jointly owned IP policy for, for researchers to say I don't want the university to be involved in commercialization. They can do this independently of

the resources and the expertise that's available on campus. It doesn't change the resulting, 50-50 revenue sharing policy. If they are successful down the road in commercializing, there's still that 50% share that comes back to, to the university. But when they commercialize independently, they don't have the same way. They can't come back to the university down the road and say, I've spent $25,000 on costs. Can you cover half of them? So, there are times where it makes a lot of sense for an innovation to be, commercialized independently by the, the inventors. Some of the inventors that come into the office have had companies before. They know intellectual property, they know the commercialization route. And, you know, they're not reliant on what the university can provide. But if you're a student, if you've never done this before, if you're concerned that, you're negotiating with a company from a position of weakness, you don't know what is, a fair term to take and what's not. That's where the university comes in. So, we want to ensure that, the rights, that of the inventors are respected. And, if there is some commercial success and if there's revenues that they can share in that reward.

RAJEEV
And that's why you're taking the 50%, right? In many ways, yes. You are putting the cost upfront without even knowing whether it will yield any results or not, you are ensuring that you're negotiating on the behalf of the researchers and keeping their….

JANINE
Best interests.

RAJEEV
Keeping their best interests in mind. So that's, that's important for people to remember that many times you think that, hey, the university's taking away half of what I could potentially earn. But then, you're also taking up half of the losses. And not half, but full of them.

LOREN
Yeah, exactly. So if something we take the risk that if, something is ultimately not commercialized, that the inventors are not responsible for, for the financial costs that go by that. So, it's not just the cost of filing a patent application and prosecuting a pat application. It could be legal costs. It could be marketing costs. We want to make sure that, if something doesn't move forward, that the inventors are not on the hook for that. And, the other thing that I'll say is that, when revenue does come in, it is often what it is applied back to, the filing of future patent applications. So it is actually something that is rolled back in, we spend money on applications if we're successful and there's some commercialization revenue that comes in, that commercialization revenue is then rolled back in to support the commercialization goals and the innovation goals of researchers that come within the years to come.

JANINE
Okay. So Loren, how does the, community get in touch with you and your office?

LOREN
So the easiest way to get in touch with us is through our email address, it's 'partnerships@umanitoba.ca' If you send an email to the partnerships, address, it will come into my office. I would say, it's really helpful if you could let us know what your question is, where are you coming from campus. Because that'll allow us to be able to you to route your inquiry to the technology transfer manager that has the experience and the ability to help you. And what will happen is they'll reach out and for conversation.

JANINE
Okay. I'm hoping that this episode is going to, like, trigger a lot more work for you.

LOREN
It's good to be busy.

RAJEEV
Does this happen that, sometimes people come in with disputes to your office? Sometimes there are disputes between the students and the PI or any other dispute of that kind? Should the parties be contacting PKMI at all for that?

LOREN
Yeah, it does happen sometimes. If there's a new invention that comes in, if there's a dispute, can be between different students or post-docs are involved or faculty members on contribution or what is the percentage.

RAJEEV
Exactly, right. There are so many things that are going on.

LOREN
It's rare, but it does happen, where inventors cannot come to a decision on relative shares and what percentage of effort that they have put in to create an invention. So, when that does come in, we will try and sit down with the faculty members and the students and the post-docs and try talk it through. The one thing I'd say is that the university and the partnerships office, we don't impose a percentage at the end because, the partnerships office we have obligations to researchers, to students and to staff. We can't go slide to one side or to the other. We want to mediate. So, that's really what our role is. And if through that mediation process, we still can't

come to an equitable agreement that everyone is happy with, or if not happy with everyone can live with, we will, if absolutely necessary, go out to bring in a third party, either a patent agent or a lawyer from outside the university that's completely removed, have that lawyer or that agent sit down with each and individual member, each and individual inventor and go through what their contribution was to creating that. And then that third party will come back to the university and come back to the inventors and say, in my estimation, this is how things should be divided up. It's very rare that happens, but it has happened a couple of times in the course of my career where, we just haven't been able to come to a decision on who should be involved and who should be an inventor and at what level.

RAJEEV
So just in case you have a dispute that you are probably the best office to reach out to.

LOREN
Exactly. So we can help mediate that conversation because we're, sort of we're removed from that. We're not within the lab, we're not within that research program and we're there to advocate on behalf of everyone that's at the table.

RAJEEV
Are there any particular programs? We've been hearing so much about the Lab2Market program, and I think that's part of your portfolio, isn't it?

LOREN
It is. Yeah, it is. And we're very excited about the lab to market program. The University of Manitoba is the lead institution for one of six regional hubs. So, we're the lead institution for the Lab2Market, Prairies Hub and we represent Lab2Market training and we support Lab2Market training. Not just at the University of Manitoba, but in all of Manitoba and all of Saskatchewan for post-secondary students. And that's not only, university students, but it's also college students as well. So, it's been a very interesting program. It came about through conversations about 5 or 6 years ago between, Dalhousie University and Toronto Metropolitan, that we're looking at, the landscape of entrepreneurial training across the country. And, the take home from those conversations was that there were, different universities all across the country, different colleges all across the country had entrepreneurial training programs. But, the ecosystem and the network was very fragmented. The training that you would get from one institution might be very different if you were at another institution. And there was an understanding that there was a need for a national standardized training for post-secondary researchers, mostly students, who are interested in becoming entrepreneurs.

RAJEEV
I see okay.

LOREN
The need for that or the understanding that if you're at the University of Victoria and you want to go through a Lab2Market training program, you'll have the same support and the same training, as if you did it at University of Manitoba, Toronto, or you did it in, Dalhousie in Halifax.

RAJEEV
So the Lab2Market program is now, starting the next cohort very soon. So, can you tell us something about what this launch program is?

LOREN
So, we run three different programs as part of Lab2Market. The first program is called Discover. And Discover is at its very core. It's a very low touch program. It's free for students to apply for and to attend. And it really comes down to, what is entrepreneurship? I'm curious about becoming an entrepreneur. I don't have a business idea right now, but I'd like to learn more information about what is it like, what should I keep in mind if I want to, enter into entrepreneurship or consider it as a career choice? So, the next program that we do, which is the core, is called, Lab2Market Validate. It is focused mainly on market validation. So, one of the things that we want to do for, for Lab2Market is that before you, you jump into the pool, before you create the startup, and you put your money into this and, and put your time into it. We want to do market validation on your business idea. And so that is what we support, trainees. So, students and postdocs and doing is a 16 week program that, focuses on teaching you how to get out into the market to interview potential buyers or people that would be interested or companies that would be interested in your product and getting feedback on it.

RAJEEV
And if you are an a student or researcher with an idea and instead of directly jumping in, I guess the first thing you should do is join the validate program. And, you'll get help from mentors and you will know how to do validation.

LOREN
Exactly. The programs are run, by entrepreneurs. So they're not run by academics. They're, run by people, who've been entrepreneurs, have built companies, have failed and succeeded and have that real world experience. And, the goal is, is at the end of that validate program, you want to be able to, decide whether or not this is a really good business idea or, again, it's a really good academic project and whether or not you want to move forward on it. We probably have, I think, nationally about a third of the people that go through validate, we'll say, get to the

end of the program and say, I don't have a business idea. And to those to those trainees, to those participants, we always say that that's not a failure. No, it's absolutely not a failure. You have not wasted your time on it, and you've come out of the program with some very important skills. Not only in entrepreneurship, but when you leave the university, when you graduate, when you start to look for work, that ability to cold call people up and have a 15 minute interview and say, hey look, can I can I tell you about my idea, to create a pitch deck. We're very good at universities in making academic presentations. But an academic presentation is not the same thing as if you're pitching to someone in the community or to an investor. So we teach those skills on how to do, a very short, very focused deck and networking. All of these skills, whether or not you come up to the end of the validate program and decide that you want to continue in entrepreneurship, or you're going to go back into the lab, or you're going to go work for a company, whether you come back to entrepreneurship in six months or five years or in ten years, those skills never go out of style. And they're still valuable to your career?

But the launch program is designed for, young entrepreneurs who have done some, early stage market validation, like we do in validate, have decided that they are still interested in pursuing a startup. And the launch program is a much more tailored training. So you're provided with training support and access to entrepreneurs again, who have done this. A mock founder council that can help you, sit down with you 3 or 4 times over the course of the program and say, what do you need for your particular business to move forward? Sometimes that's more market validation. Sometimes that's R&D, it's prototyping, sometimes that's, pitch coaching. And so whatever you need within the launch program, that experience in that training is tailored for those participants.

RAJEEV
Is there any monetary support that people get for.

LOREN
Yes there is. So, Discover is just an open program. But Validate and Launch participants receive, $10,000, and that $10,000 comes through a partnership with Mitacs through their business strategy, internships. And that $10,000 is really there for a couple of reasons. One, it's that often the participants are graduate students as well, and we're asking their faculty members, to allow them to step away from a lot of their research commitments over a period of three months. And because this is a program that you can't do an hour or two, a couple times a week, maybe on the weekends, we ask, the participants to enter into, Validate or Launch to really commit, as a full time venture during that three month period. And so, that $10,000 can be, salary replacement support. It's really hard to be able to do this if you can't pay your rent. In some cases, if the researcher is also an inventor and they're interested in being a part of the startup, that $10,000 can be used go to market, to go to conferences or to help move your

technology forward and another way to do marketing. So it is an exciting option to be able to say, I can go through this program and I can be paid to do it, because again, we really that's the one thing we ask our participants is that if you do this, that you commit to, to the entire program.

RAJEEV
And is there a limit to how many people can you take?

LOREN
Yes, we do, 20 a maximum of 20, students for Validate. And there are, ten teams that come in to Launch. So, for the Launch program, there can be more than one student that's involved in the company. But there's only one $10,000 payment that goes per team.

RAJEEV
And do you have to be a graduate of the Validate program to be.

LOREN
No. You don't. So it's very helpful because a Validate takes you through an intensive period of market validation. But you don't absolutely have to. You can apply to the Launch program and what we look at in applications or have you done that market validation. Do you have statistics. Do you have you know, do you have things to back it up that your venture and your idea has as a commercial potential? As long as that has happened and that you're able to articulate that to the review committee, you can apply for the Launch program.

RAJEEV
So you don't have to graduate out Validate to qualify for Launch.

LOREN
No you don't. One of the one of the real take homes for Lab2Market is that, it's not about us collecting entrepreneurs and locking them into our training programs. That's not what Lab2Market is about. It's really about providing an opportunity. And for some people, the opportunity exists for them to go through all three levels of lab to market. For others, it might make sense just to do one and then to explore different training programs, different supports that are available not here, only here at the University of Manitoba, but within the wider ecosystem. That's great. At the end of the day, whether you're going through a program here on campus or you're going through a program in North Forge or somewhere else in Canada, we all share the same goal is we want to help you move forward.

RAJEEV
And one last thing on Lab2Market is that, is this, as the name suggests, it's Lab2Market. So is this meant only for the sciences faculty?

JANINE
That's my question too.

LOREN
There's some flexibility, but the really the definition is that the idea or the innovation has to be research based. So, it has to be something that comes out of, university research or college research. There's flexibility. It doesn't necessarily, I think have to be a STEM based technology. But it does have something where you have to be able to say that this is something that's come out of the work that I've done here at the university.

RAJEEV
So even social research qualifies.

LOREN
Yeah, I think social research will qualify in some cases. It depends on the idea, and it depends on, the technology in itself.

RAJEEV
So they shouldn't shy away from applying.

LOREN
No, no. I always say that, you know, if you're unsure, reach out, reach out to partnerships, reach out to the Lab2Market Prairie's team. Have a conversation. If you're not a fit for, one of the Lab2Market training programs again, we don't we don't just say, hey you, good luck to you. And you'll have to navigate this yourself. What we'll do is we'll walk you down the hall to IDEA START and say, hey look, what are other options that are available to you here in the community, here within the entrepreneurial ecosystem to help you move forward. Because having that variety is really important.

RAJEEV
Yeah, perfect.

JANINE
Okay Loren, last question for sure. Last question. And we ask this question of all of our guests. What is one piece of advice that you'd give to someone on an entrepreneurial journey?

LOREN
One piece of advice, I would say make use of everything that's available to you. So, I think that there are, so many programs. There are so much there's so much knowledge that's out there. Again, not only at the university, but within our community, around entrepreneurship, that sometimes it can feel a little daunting. Sometimes it can feel like, well, maybe this isn't quite a fit for me. And, you know, my encouragement to, to young entrepreneurs is that, if there's something there, you should take advantage of it. You never know when you're going to get that piece of advice or that piece of knowledge, or meet that person, meet that individual that can help you move forward in your entrepreneurial journey. So put yourself out there, avail yourself to everything that's out there that you can sign up for and attend because you never know when it's going to be that one little missing piece that you get.

JANINE
Good advice. Loren, thank you so much for joining us today on the IDEA START Podcast. I've learned a lot, and I trust that this has been meaningful for our audience, too.

RAJEEV
Thank you so much.

LOREN
Thank you. Thanks for having me.