

Developing novel industries

Using university-industry collaborations on IPR

Toshiya Watanabe

What we call advanced technologies are primarily knowledge-based, which depend heavily for their development on the prevailing policy scenario in intellectual property rights (IPR). Universities and R&D institutions play a major role in the transfer and licensing of such technologies, because they can catalyze development of start-up high-tech ventures. University-industry collaboration, therefore, could be a powerful driving force for the growth and development of high-tech ventures. This article discusses university-industry collaborations on IPRs in the development of high-tech start-up ventures in Japan.

Introduction

Until the 1980s, the Japanese economy, with its low-priced and homogeneous mass products, boomed. It was, after all, the world's factory.

Most industries during this period relied on science, technology and manufacturing procedures that had been developed in the USA and Europe, and very few had self-developed technology. However, in the '80s, Japan changed its industrial development policy and started to put more emphasis on the development of its own technology. To some extent, this pro-science-and-technology policy was adopted under US pressure during the Structural Impediments Initiative Negotiations. But more importantly, it was the

foreseeable shortage in basic inventions of mechanical and electronic products that brought about the "Science and Technology Fundamental Law (1995)" and the "Science and Technology Fundamental Plan." Later the Japanese Government declared a pro-patent policy to protect the enormous investments made in science and technology, and in 1998, a "Law to Promote the Transferring of Technology from Universities and Others" (Technology Transfer Promotion Law) was passed to facilitate industry-university collaboration. Thereafter an even stronger intellectual property policy was initiated, and a Government Strategic Council on Intellectual Property was formed this year, which was followed by a government announcement of "the main strategic principles of intellectual property." The Council is currently dis

Dr. Toshiya Watanabe
*Research Centre for Advanced
Science and Technology
Dept. of Research Strategy
and Social Systems
The University of Tokyo
4-6-1 Komaba, Meguro-ku
Tokyo 153-8904, Japan
Tel: (+81-3) 5452-5332
Fax: (+81-3) 5452-5334
E-mail:
watanabe@fchem.chem.t.u-tokyo.ac.jp*