Overview

The University of Pisa has a rich source of innovation within its over 200 labs and 20 departments, which span all areas of science and technology. Since the early 2000s, it started to manage the technology transfer process through a dedicated team composed of experts in intellectual property management and commercialization of research. Faculty members and researchers aspiring to create value for society and economy may thus find support on patenting, spin-off creation, business modeling and planning, venture and other funding opportunities, as well as on networking with other industries in order to commercialize products or promote the growth and expansion of their spin-offs.

Although this brochure is focused on patents and spin-offs, we remark that technology transfer takes place in the University of Pisa also through applied-research collaborations with worldwide companies that, in the last year, financed our research for more than 19.5 M.

Patenting and Licensing

For over ten years, the University of Pisa has directly patented many inventions spurring from its research laboratories. As of 2015, the Patent Portfolio was composed of:

• 102 filed Italian patents, of which 81 granted;
• 16 US Patents, of which 7 granted;
• 22 European patents, of which 9 granted;
• 102 filed Italian patents, of which 81 granted;
• 49 national designations in compliance with PCT;

many inventions spurring from the innovative researches carried on in its laboratories.

In 2002, the University of Pisa established the rules for acknowledging academic spin-offs spurring from the innovative researches carried on in its laboratories.

The University of Pisa manages the Patent Portfolio and is responsible of its licensing and royalty agreements. As of 2014 licensing revenues have grown to 450k Euros with half of this amount being collected in the last 4 years, revealing that interest in patents issued by our researchers has grown continuously over the years.

Spin-offs

Starting in 2002 the University of Pisa established the rules for acknowledging academic spin-offs spurring from the innovative researches carried on in its laboratories.

In 2004, the University of Pisa registered the Italian trademark “Azienda Spin off dell’Università di Pisa” which has been recently registered in the United States too. However, not all companies can apply for this designation or are acknowledged, since the University has taken a strict and conservative stance on the issuance of the spin-off academic brand. Up to 2015, the University of Pisa has approved 45 academic spin-offs under its strict criteria, out of a total of 59 spin-offs applying, approximately 3 spin-offs per year over the span of 13 years. Among those spin-offs, 33 companies still maintain this formal designation and strong relationship with the University, and 39 out of these 45 companies are still operating in the market.

The spin-off process has been supported recently through a training programme, called PhD plus (www.unipi.it/phdplus), launched in 2011. This unique programme, truly innovative both within the Italian University System and in the European University research community, has the goal to foster the entrepreneurial mind-set among students, researchers and academics. The programme provides the skills and tools that enable students and academics to launch and sustain an academic spin-off. Up to now, the PhD plus programme has trained more than 600 PhD and master students and it has helped to prepare the entrepreneurs to startup 17 new companies, among which 12 have been acknowledged as academic spin-offs.

In 2014 these spin-offs realized sales for about 10.9 M (3 spin-offs registered sales higher than 1.2 M). The breakdown of total sales per sector is shown in fig.3. Although representing the highest share of the University’s portfolio, Life Sciences spin-offs have achieved less sales since they just have started their activity.

The 45 spin-off companies of the University of Pisa have been awarded with 78 prizes and awards coming from business plan competitions and other events devoted to start ups and innovative business projects. It is interesting to point out that 46 of these prizes have been awarded to spin-offs created during the last 5 years.

Best practices and networks

The University of Pisa contributes to several initiatives related to every aspect of the technology transfer process at regional, national and international level. It supports the pre-incubator stage both inside the laboratories and in collaboration with the regional productive clusters and the four Tuscan districts operating in the fields of ICT, Energy, Life Sciences and Cultural Heritage. The University of Pisa is member of the NETVAL “Network for the promotion of University Research”, associated with PROTON EUROPE, and participates in the initiatives of the Association of University Incubators (PNI cube). It is currently participating in national and European research projects related to the creation of new ventures in the field of Internet of Things (IoTPlus) and to the exchange innovative best practices to foster entrepreneurship, as in the European Entrepreneurs Campus and in the European Network of Design for Resilient Entrepreneurship (ENDuRE) project, the latter in partnership with United Kingdom and Denmark.