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Bridges II: The Law–STEM Alliance & Next Generation Innovation

*Daryl Lim**

What incentives would foster more collaboration between the law and STEM fields, in either academic or business/entrepreneurial settings?

Collaboration between law–STEM experts can be fostered through facilitating intellectual property (IP) commercialization, enabling regulatory “sandboxes,” and promoting local and international partnerships.

1. Facilitate IP Commercialization at Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs)

Bringing ideas from IHLs to the marketplace provides a natural platform for law–STEM experts to collaborate. Several factors can help facilitate IP commercialization. First, law–STEM experts can draft joint model IP protocols to provide clarity and consistency in commercializing IP. These also help to simplify and shorten negotiations between IHLs and industry partners. Second, patent monetization entities (PMEs), working with law–STEM experts, can help value IP, strategize, market, and license or assign IP rights. PMEs can also help IHLs to bundle and translate innovation into commercial value. Third, experienced and successful law–STEM partners can groom and inspire future generations through a mentorship system. This is important in strengthening a sense of community among budding collaborators.

2. Invest in Regulatory “Sandboxes”

Regulatory “sandboxes” are particularly important in facilitating the growth of new sectors created by disruptive technologies, as the boundaries between regulated and unregulated areas can become blurred. These “sandboxes” are “safe spaces” where law–STEM collaborations can experiment with innovative products, services, and business models without being concerned about infringing legal or institutional restrictions. These “sandboxes” thus allow a “test and learn” approach that mitigates risks while keeping the collaborative environment conducive to innovation. “Sandbox”-specific regulations may be time-limited so new regulations can

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be devised that incorporate appropriate parameters while giving –STEM collaborations nimbleness and freedom to operate.

3. *Promote Local and International Partnerships*

IHLs can partner with local legal and STEM experts to teach and perform applied research on a full-time or part-time basis. These experts can work with industry partners and government agencies in planning projects and proposing technological solutions. Additionally, international connections expand the pool of opportunities to spark new nodes of law–STEM collaboration. Working across geographical and cultural boundaries also fosters the open mindset necessary for law–STEM collaborations to succeed. These connections can link local law–STEM nodes with overseas partners and key markets. Local law firms and tech companies may set up innovation launchpads with IHLs to access foreign opportunities and ideas. Similarly, IHLs can also serve as welcome centers for foreign law–STEM experts and enterprises seeking out partners in the United States.

Technological change recently has altered business models in the legal field, and these changes will continue to affect the practice of law itself. How can we, as educators, prepare law students to meet the challenges of new technology throughout their careers?

1. *At School*

Acquiring technological skills is an individually driven endeavor. Educators can prepare law students to be future-ready by inculcating an openness to acquire multidisciplinary skills throughout their lives. Educators can impress on their students the need to acquire new skills to remain relevant and to continue creating value for employers. Through internships, students can be exposed to the technological demands of the legal field. Internships at STEM-centric companies also expose students to opportunities available to attorneys who invest in new skills and knowledge. Educators can also invite partners in government, corporations, and private practice to play an active role in student admission and curriculum design. For example, these partners can sit on admissions committees and/or interviews. These partners can also provide substantive input into the courses taught to make sure that the content of what is taught is in sync with workplace demands.

2. *Back to School*

Educators can offer industry-endorsed modularized training that enables lawyers to return and retrain. Programs can be conducted remotely via video and over handheld devices so lawyers can retrain on their own time. One-step education, training, and career guidance portals can also help to

coordinate training efforts across institutions. At the same time, educators should also collaborate with employers so that employees who invest in reskilling themselves are professionally recognized and rewarded. It is crucial that employers take ownership in skill utilization, and that they reward attorneys who reskill in emerging practice areas, since the workplace is ultimately what gives relevance to the employees' efforts. This supportive milieu will in turn help set in motion a virtuous cycle where successful employees inspire their colleagues to invest in reskilling themselves.