



University

University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Center Director

Alexandra Thompson
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Center Location

Outreach Unit

Center since 2012

Center Activities

- Entrepreneurship support
- Commercialization support
- Technical assistance
- Applied research

Clients

- Entrepreneurs and innovators
- Small businesses and start-ups
- Students and faculty

Assessment Techniques

- Client interviews
- Program staff feedback
- Tracking client funding

Contact Information

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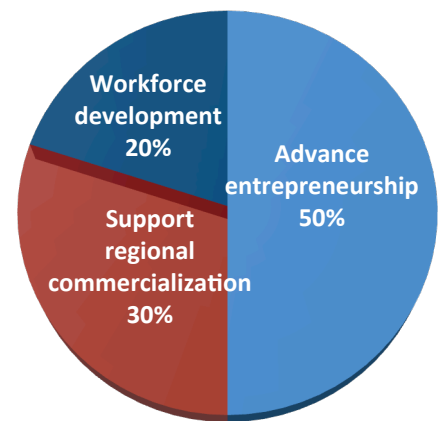
East Central Illinois University Center

East Central Illinois University Center (ECIUC) is a partnership among local educational institutions and business development resources with the goal of promoting and fostering entrepreneurship. The program's mission is to create a growing pipeline of long-term innovative and vibrant business activity within the region through entrepreneur education, start-up assistance, incubation, growth support, and investment.

Activities

ECIUC works to leverage an already strong base of technology development and commercialization at the University of Illinois (UI) through partnerships that will bring the benefits of entrepreneurship and innovation to the economically distressed region where it is located. The Center's programs focus primarily on supporting entrepreneurship, innovation, and commercialization. Support for regional entrepreneurs includes FastTrac Courses, which are a hands-on comprehensive business development program for entrepreneurial skills designed for

residents of the EnterpriseWorks Incubator and start-ups in the broader region. The Center offers Entrepreneur-In-Residence counseling services to University Center and Research Park clients, as well as researchers. A student-led program supports entrepreneurs by providing Center clients shared services such as market assessments, web development, business plan development, lab setup, and graphic



design. ECIUC facilitates commercialization of innovative ideas generated at the Incubator and Research Park by providing SBIR/STTR technical assistance, helping entrepreneurs and companies apply for these awards. The Center is also working to extend the availability of

new community incubator programs and facilities for entrepreneurs in its service region to strengthen the innovation ecosystem (e.g., launching a new community incubator and FastTrac courses in the Village of

“The University Center has been great to work/participate with. It has been a tremendous help in working with new business potential and has assisted in developing new and beneficial contacts and partnerships.”

--Center Stakeholder

Rantoul). Applied research activities support this goal by cataloguing regional resources, identifying gaps, and creating action plans to expand incubation facilities.

Leveraging

ECIUC relies upon UI and other partner colleges for data resources, analytical/faculty expertise, student labor, and technology commercialization services. Many Center clients reside within the UI

Research Park and its EnterpriseWorks Incubator. The extension of Center services in the broader region requires a range of local partnerships, such as Village of Rantoul and Rantoul Business Center to establish incubation services there. Other external partnerships for program and service delivery include UI-Parkland College, Champaign County EDC and SBDC, and Champaign County Regional Planning Commission.

Success

Entrepreneur-In-Residence services for start-ups

ECIUC provides Entrepreneur-In-Residence (EIR) counseling services to University of Illinois (UI) researchers and clients of the UI Research Park. The program hires local experienced technology entrepreneurs to provide monthly consulting to new startup ventures and prospective technology entrepreneurs. By sourcing this talent from the local region, the program selects peers who have faced similar challenges in commercializing research/early stage technology. Cazoodle – a graduate of the UI EnterpriseWorks incubator – benefited from the EIR program. Advice and insights from three EIRs helped the company develop revenue streams, solidify a

pitch for potential investors, and fine-tune its focus.

By drawing upon deep regional expertise in entrepreneurship to help other new startups, the Center is supporting the region’s pipeline of innovation talent to become viable, job-creating business activities.

SBIR technical assistance for start-ups

The SBIR program encourages entrepreneurs to apply for federal grants by giving free guidance to small businesses interested in submitting proposals. A consultant provides training two times a year on the overall SBIR/ STTR program and shorter workshops with specific topic areas. Through this program

entrepreneurs can become familiar with SBIRs, search solicitations, learn best practices for applications, talk with program managers, draft a budget, write a commercialization plan, or execute an award agreement. The program has also worked in collaboration with UI Credit Union to develop an innovative lending program for companies that have been awarded Phase II SBIR/STTR Grants.

The SBIR assistance is in great demand from local entrepreneurs. Since launching this service in July 2012, 32 companies have been served by the SBIR consultant. In 2012, more than \$5.4 million in SBIR/STTR funds were received by 12 incubator companies through 17 awards.