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BUILD IT AND THEY'LL BE ENTREPRENEURIAL? ASSESSING THE INFLUENCE OF UNIVERSITY INFRASTRUCTURE ON FACULTY MEMBERS' ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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INTERACTIVE PAPER

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Principal Topic

Regional economic development results from expert knowledge, highly educated people, and scientific discoveries, (Saxenian, 1994; Klofsten & Jones-Evans, 2000; Florida, 2002; Bok, 2003; Etzkowitz, 2003; Venkataraman, 2003). The importance of higher education institutions as sources of many of these key ingredients has led to studies of academic entrepreneurship from multiple perspectives (Owen-Smith, 2000; Powers, 2000; Siegel et al., 2003; Shane, 2004), yet relatively few studies of academic entrepreneurship or technology transfer consider the individual level of analysis (Rothaermel et al., 2007; Djokovic & Souitaris, 2008).

Building on the entrepreneurial cognition literature, we examine why some faculty researchers, and not others, exploit opportunities related to their scholarship. We evaluate the relative importance of different aspects of universities’ commercialization infrastructure, as well as academic scholars’ perceptions of institutional and school-level policies on their intentions and decisions to exploit potential commercial opportunities related to their scholarship. At a time when an increasing number of universities want to stimulate entrepreneurial activity among faculty, this examination of the impact of real and perceived environmental context on academic entrepreneurs’ commercialization intentions and actions is timely.

Method

Using multivariate techniques, the study tests a model of entrepreneurial intentions with a sample of faculty affiliated with 21 universities and medical schools in a large northeastern state who have recognize an opportunity related to their research (n=399). The model includes an array of institutional characteristics that may promote or discourage entrepreneurial behavior. Additionally, we examine the moderating effect of a variety of individual characteristics.

Results and Implications

Preliminary findings suggest that faculty perceptions of institutional support for academic entrepreneurship are less important than the institution’s actual infrastructure strength in predicting entrepreneurial intentions. This implies that universities seeking to shape faculty behavior can do so through investment in enabling programs, resources and physical infrastructure, rather than focusing on faculty perceptions of institutional policies. Results of this study could inform higher education leaders seeking to better understand manage the dynamics that lead faculty researchers to commercialize their ideas and discoveries.

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