

# Business Better (Episode 47): Cultivating Innovation and Economic Development at Higher-Ed Institutions with Zach Miles from the Oklahoma State University Research Foundation

Speakers: Scott Marty and Zach Miles

Scott Marty:

Welcome back to Business Better, a podcast designed to help businesses navigate the new normal. I'm your host, Scott Marty. I'm a registered Patent Attorney and member of the Intellectual Property Department and Higher Education Group at Ballard Spahr. Ballard Spahr is a national law firm with clients across all industries and across the world. I've spent the last 18 years working alongside higher education clients and have watched higher education institutions continue to invent and develop new ways to grow economic development, both on and off the campus. This episode is part of a new podcast series where we will visit with different leaders striving to grow economic development in the areas or regions of interest. We will be discussing new initiatives, new models, the interest and investment in technology parks, incubators and accelerators, as well as other creative economic development platforms being implemented throughout the country.

Scott Marty:

I'm very excited about our episode today, as this episode features a discussion of nationwide trends and initiatives being used to cultivate communities of innovation at global anchor institutions such as universities, municipalities, federal labs and corporations. Again, my name is Scott Marty and I'll be leading the discussion today. My guest today is an old friend, Zach Miles. Zach's a fellow patent attorney. Zach is currently the Senior Associate Vice President of Technology Economic Development and the Executive Director at Oklahoma State University Research Foundation. Prior to his current position, Zach was the Associate Vice President for Economic Development at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas where he oversaw technology transfer, commercial collaborations, UNLV's Small Business Development Center and was the Executive Director of UNLV's Research Foundation.

Scott Marty:

Prior to his tenure at UNLV, Zach served in numerous roles at the University of Utah, playing key roles in technology and digital commercialization. Welcome, Zach.

Zach Miles:

Thanks, Scott. I'm excited to be with you today and talk about this. It'll be great.

Scott Marty:

This is going to be a lot of fun, I think. So I gave a little bit of a laundry list of some of the places you've been, but your career and my career have paralleled each other over almost, scarily enough, almost 20 years. I know you've been in the game, I've been in the game for a long time and have had the opportunity to see, and for you to actually lead economic development in a variety of institutions in a number of different roles on top of that. So with all of that experience, how far have we come with econ dev at higher education institutions since you first entered the world of that econ dev?

Zach Miles:

Yeah, I think we probably were studying the bar or patent bar and the law bar of the same times as we were crossing paths with our careers. But it has been a while, but it's been an exciting time to see some of the growth in this industry. I think 20 years ago is a lot different than it is today. And they're broad statements versus there are plenty of instances where it goes against the broad norms or what you'd like to talk about as far as it comes to tech transfer. But I think it's really changed from the earliest days. At least when I was starting out the tech transfer to economic development, I think it was a bit of a reactive organization that, you'd have invention disclosures come in and you'd patent those and you're trying to market it, but you're waiting for someone to come and license it.

Zach Miles:

You do some indirect and direct, but there wasn't much effort beyond that. Same with some of the industry contracts and venture capital, and the research parks have always been really good locations to house companies, but so far as it being part of an overall value add organization, I think that's what's changed over the 20 years. That they're reactive to a period of time probably in the early 2000s where everyone focused on startup companies. Remember the war for everyone starting as many companies as they possibly could, to what I think you're entering and where it's going to be headed in the future, is more of a unified or a line organization. It's not just tech transfer, it's industry engagement and trying to go and buy mutually beneficial collaborations with companies and not just licensing the sponsored research.

Zach Miles:

And how do you grow your local economy? How do you bring those companies in? Whether it be their relocating or expanding, or just a single presence. And how do you leverage some of the state resources, some of the university resources, donations, or state statute's legislation that gives some resources to the organization. And even the governing bodies for at least the public land grant universities did what amounted to a study in 2017, and really worth taking a look at. Tech transfer and what it should be and encouraging institutions to take a better or a broader look at that and not just as a revenue generator, but how is it an organization that can impact the overall institution? How is it an organization that can impact the local regional economies and be a playing force throughout the world. And another one I think is really starting to take off is more institutions are starting to align with each other, more of a regional play versus just a single institution trying to leverage their resources.

Zach Miles:

You see this a little bit with some of the hub proposals that are going in for I-Corps and trying to have a regional areas of economic development. And even some of the companies like Amazon in the North Eastern part of the country looking for not just areas to move that there's tax incentives, but how are you aligning your communities and your institutions and workforce to make sure all of those organizations are fitting into the picture? So I think we've entered an interesting area at an interesting time, and it's just gone gangbusters after that. Whether it be new initiatives or just the focus in this particular area. So it's been a fun ride.

Scott Marty:

So you mentioned I-Corps just a moment ago. And so for our listeners who don't know what that is or how it works, could you share a little bit about what I-Corps is and maybe if you've taken advantage of that inner institutional consortia?

Zach Miles:

Yeah. I-Corps ends up being a program sponsored by NSF and is intended to help entrepreneurs, whether those be researchers or students at institutions that have some funding from the NSF or these programs to guide them through some of the lean launchpad principles and go out and talk with consumers and really build the products. So it's the NSF's way of trying to leverage the talent that's at institutions, and trying to provide or grease the skids as it were with some money that they really test and validate, whether they've got a product, trying to get it to a minimum viable product, seeing if consumers

actually want it. And it's helped to bridge a bit of a gap that probably continues to exist between academic innovation or ideas and trying to actually see them launching products.

Zach Miles:

So it's nice to see I-Corps and other types of programs stepping in and helping to teach entrepreneurial principles and give some small light, fast money into the ecosystem to help these companies move forward. And I've been a part of a couple of organizations that are currently submitting or have submitted hub proposals, and it'll be interesting to see which proposals come out of NSF and are awarded. I think they've gone through the initial one and they're going through a secondary one. But again, I think it points to this, let's try to leverage all of the resources that are available at institutions, whether that be on campus again with tools or personnel, but also the entrepreneurs and mentors and executives and venture capital and funding sources that are across those regions.

Zach Miles:

Is it Oklahoma that potentially could tap into Texas or Nevada at the time, tapping into California and getting some of the spillover from there and being so close to some of those funding sources. And Utah was a bit unique in that it tapped into, but it really aligned and grew its own venture capital communities, all the way from seed to fall on and the university and government and the local community all in line to be a part of that and the service providers. It's great that you're doing this because you've been there from the very beginning, and the law firms to everybody else trying to step in and figure out, how do we drive this together? So yeah, I-Corps is a little bit on tangent there, but I-Corps is one of those programs that really helped to motivate, really helped to provide some tools that either haven't existed or they haven't been pulled together in that type of fashion that makes it really unique.

Scott Marty:

That's interesting. And I know again having worked with you for as long as we have, a trend that I see come in and come out and come in and come out and roll through, is this idea of an inner institutional relationship. Having whether it be like PAC 12 or the SouthEastern Conference, I think we see a lot less of it in the South East. I've seen a lot more of it out in the Mountain West, out in the California area and some of the Northeast. There in Oklahoma, do you see that desire to keep it local? Or now being where you are, do you see that as being something that they're looking to reach broader to other either larger or smaller institutions?

Zach Miles:

That's an interesting question. And I think, at least in Oklahoma right now, from my perspective, it's been this desire to engage with others, but trying to figure out what Oklahoma has to offer and aligning those efforts first. It's like, "Yes, we would love to, but what is our venture capital community? And what are we willing to commit and put in? And who's going to take the lead. And if it's an engagement, who is the go box, who do they enter into? Is it the state? Is it the university? Is it another program that is the point that can align all these efforts?" So I think you've got not a juxtaposition of organizations, but more of a, "How do we get our own pieces together in a better fashion that we could be a value and we can offer more to the region?"

Zach Miles:

And we started a few of those engagements. We just brought in Gener8tor out of Wisconsin for their gBETA program that's going to be housed out of Oklahoma city. We have a sharp hub that we engage with Kansas and a few others on that are trying to help bio companies move forward similar to the Ascend program that UNLV is a part of with New Mexico. So those are occurring or building, and some of them are hidden gems that never really realized that was going on and it's just been hidden. So I think Oklahoma is more in this transition period where it wants to be more proactive and engaged. But I think it's taking the right approach in aligning some of what it's doing first before it's jumping in with other organizations.

Scott Marty:

Well, it's interesting. Again, I think the trends are the trends in that, it's not a one size fits all type of approach. I've certainly been involved in initiatives that their mandate is to keep it regional. I have been involved in some, where the trend is to make it national. I've seen less on the international side, where I think those are more one-offs. In your experience, is that still the trend that you're seeing?

Zach Miles:

I think so. Although I will say UNLV probably had a little bit more of an international flavor to it, more because it ended up being a center for an international product that they were looked at as the experts in. So hospitality and entertainment and gaming, which is interestingly coming from Utah. Because I think that UNLV was very interested in pushing, "Well, how could we set up a pharmaceutical company and how can we do med device, and how can we do all this?" And what it really turned into, and I think it's a wise advice for everybody is, don't look so far down the path of other areas that you forget what your local economy is already doing and how you can build off of that. So I think there was a little more of an international flavor there. We had engagements from Japan and Macau and different organizations that came into Black Fire that was stood up there, that obviously and others that had funding to do it and helping to establish that.

Zach Miles:

And Len Jessup at the time, he was a dear president at UNLV. And how can we leverage what already exists and build off of that. So yeah, from Panasonic to Intel, to Adobe and others that located at Black Fire that ended up being, we want to work on artificial intelligence and augmented reality and hotel room of the future, that gaming was great, and it helped with that, but also spur or turn it into economic diversification, that wasn't a pharmaceutical, but it brought in different industries. So I think you're right, I think it is still national with international being, that would be great if we could do it. But we traveled to a couple of different countries in Europe and we're preaching what we were doing at UNLV for hospitality. But Utah I don't think that there was, I think it was a regional and if we had influence elsewhere, that's fantastic, that's great.

Zach Miles:

I think Oklahoma is the same when it's very focused on, not focused in a negative way, but fuels and energy, and what else can they do. I've had plenty of conversations with local companies that even though they're holding on to some of the oil and gas industries they're looking at, "What are the alternatives and what else can we do and what are polymers we can look at, with all of this stuff that we pull out of the ground or even hydrogen, or what can we do with autonomous vehicles and what can we do with biofuels?" And they're looking at it, they're very interested in it and it has some international flavor, but it really is trying to be a good point of leverage where you're at once you have.

Scott Marty:

It's interesting. So to go back to something else that you raised, was students. And I think a topic that I actually haven't had the opportunity to talk to many people about is the different ways to encourage and to foster innovation from students and how different institutions deal with student innovations. Maybe you could share a little bit of what your experience is or was, and what it is now with promoting and fostering student innovations.

Zach Miles:

And I don't know who to give this credit to if they want it. But it was interesting talking with a few of the researchers, and I think the sentiment would still be here too, that they start preaching innovation, and most of the time their comment is, "We're great and wonderful at that, but you really need to engage with the students because they don't have some of the background that entrenches them. And some of the ideas that we already hold onto them, they're free thinkers and have a lot of energy." So yeah, I think there is this trend with students as well that they're not looking at being employees necessarily, they want to be employers. And they're entering into their education looking for entrepreneurial activities, real-world applications of their academics. And you've got a lot of programs that are being established that support it.

Zach Miles:

So OSU has the Riata center in their business school, and we had RebelForge at UNLV and then LASAN center is a organization at U of U that was stood up and has a lot of resources to help foster this. And then you wind up with these students just going to town. And you create a... I think it's a positive, but you create a situation where they get out over their skis quite a bit. I like to do that, I fall all the time you know that Scott, but on the slopes, but they need some guidance. And if you can put the right resources behind them so that they don't get into extreme situations that they're unfamiliar with, or they wind up being a little too eager and you can help along the way. You've got this energy and you've got this new way of thinking that really helps to drive that kind of development.

Zach Miles:

So I've always leveraged students to work on intellectual property, that the universities have owned, they're willing to put business plans and make phone calls and put companies together and try to find resources. And it's also a bit of a bait and switch because we like students showing up, people are a little more amicable to talking with a student about something that is, maybe I-Corps. So there's this desire to support the next generation. And so there's a lot to be said about focusing on that particular asset.

Scott Marty:

Everything you said, I think is something that I agree with and something that I see as well. Whether it be student innovation or student interns learning to do what you do. Learning how difficult the technology commercialization path is. How to build teams, how to push a product from conception to reduction, to practice, to commercialization and moving down that pathway. So taking that innovation to commercialization, something that I know you've also seen is the structure of offices, how people build their team. How do you staff your initiatives and how do you build your teams there at OSU?

Zach Miles:

Yeah. And I think this will be an interesting conversation for quite a few years on how these are put together. Because some of the incentives are changing and some of the focus areas are changing and there's a lot of groups and individuals out there, the Brian Cummings and the Brian Richie's, and at least I have personal contacts with, of the world that are trying to rethink how we do this. So I think that's part of the conversation is, how to set up. So I'm a... It is the wrong word, but I like the word aggregation and value add. So as much as possible at OSU and certainly at UNLV what organizations or individuals that are already existing or that fill a need, can we bring together to have a bit of a single point of contact with industry, so they don't need to have to go looking and so that the resources can build off of one another.

Zach Miles:

So we have a proactive industry engagement, professionals in office. We're hiring a communication's coordinator because it's a little different than trying to communicate with industry and making that a focus, than potentially a student or potentially a researcher. How do you drive that? So we own a for-profit company called Cowboy technologies that holds all of our equity interests. We make investments in startup companies that have licensed our intellectual property. We have the classic licensing managers, but it's less about them pitching a technology and more about figuring out what industry would need, a start up or something else. And building the conversation is how the university can help that particular situation. Is it a resource on campus that they need access to, but they just can't afford the \$500,000 piece of machine is all I need to pretend this. Well great, we probably have it sitting on campus.

Zach Miles:

How can students get engaged and be able to provide benefit either internship or working on a project? Or what funding can we bring in? Which I think there's a big push, which I think is the right area to focus on is bridging this gap. How do you get potentially donations in, how do you work with the state? I still like to U-StART program and the OH fund from Utah days and Nevada days, of what can they put behind this to help encourage innovation and attracting companies? What and or

physical assets do you have at your research park that people can utilize, either for free and supporting a company in the coworking space or incubator accelerator, as well as the big companies you get like the Panasonic's of the world, how could they come in and be in an environment that helps them innovate and leverage those resources?

Zach Miles:

So I'm not much in favor of separating out all of these organizations and having multiple contacts, because I think there's a synergy. There's a multiplying effect that takes place with having all of those organizations under one roof. And seeing, "When I do this, I can plug you into these resources that are here to help drive this forward." Further and we've been preaching and focused on relationship versus transaction. So how can I have a relationship with an organization, the state, whoever else that we can be part of that driving force, versus either we do a license agreement with them or we get a sponsored research agreement, that's fantastic. Versus let's think of how we could bring in other assets and how can we drive this? And what are the impacts versus just revenue that can come in?

Zach Miles:

And I think you see that a lot in different organizations. Some are reporting to the president, some are still VPR, some are sitting out in research foundations, but I think everyone's struggling a little bit right now with how do you put it together? There's been a lot of models that have come and gone, or that have spiked and fallen into the background, but the importance continues to grow. And I think institutions are feeling that, it's not just from students, it's from the government, it's from the community and putting a bit of pressure of, we love to see all of these innovations that are coming out and affecting our lives but, I think they're starting to become a bit more aware of how that process occurs and what needs to be put in place to help move it forward.

Zach Miles:

I joke a little bit with the foundation for donations, I think that's an area that's just not tapped into enough. As long as you can do it the right way and not make deans or others a little nervous about you contacting their folks. But you can sell an individual on... students may not thank you or buildings may get renamed. But you start putting into economic development and pushing tech and translating the technology that you see, and an initial idea ended up on the shelf and knowing that you contributed to that, and it's still bringing in resources and opportunities for students back to the university, you really going to create this evergreen cycle there. So I probably am focused on that more now than ever, because I'm right in the middle of getting everything set up.

Zach Miles:

But I think that's a valuable piece of finding where, one aggregating the resources and finding some additional ones to help grease the skids with these organizations. One that I thought was useful at Nevada is we put together the sports research and innovation Institute, and had a program that we would match funding, go internal, but match funding with industry players that were involved in sports research. Again, I'm focusing on a new and emerging industry that Vegas was focused on. And similar here Governor Stitt and President Shrum who's just coming in, I think they have this focus on, "What do we need to be doing to help encourage this?" And I'm not taking it out of the norm, but continue to encourage is the venture capital side of translational funds, so having these conversations and these bright people are really taking it to the next level, which has been great.

Zach Miles:

I've experienced this at Utah and Nevada. But same at OSU, My boss Kenneth Sewell, he's great. I told him that I get out over my skis a little bit, you may have to reel me back in. And he just let it go and trying to support where he possibly can in different areas, because he sees the importance and wants it to have great impact. So it's nice to have that leadership that really allows what are unique and potentially well different focus for the university, head down that path a bit and see where it can go with the impacts that they can have. I've been lucky in that respect that I've always had good leadership, good service

providers, the communities are around that want it to happen. I don't know if that's just from the ones that I've been involved with or that's industry-wide, but you just can't do it alone, you've got to have the entire ecosystem pushing it.

Scott Marty:

That's interesting. You touched on something which was really the impetus for this whole podcast series, which was, things that have come and gone. And I think that the work that we were fortunate enough to be a part of with Black Fire at UNLV, which was just this public private partnership. But if we tear it down a little bit further, this incubator accelerator model. And I tell the story that years and years ago there was a venture capitalist giving a talk on the ebb and flow, this wave of the building and then the vacancy of incubators and accelerators. And so that was really when I was thinking about this podcast, and it's actually grown wonderfully beyond what I originally thought it would, to talk about those trends.

Scott Marty:

And so like this incubator and accelerator pathway, I've seen them all of a sudden they grow like crazy and then they disappear. And I think it really mirrors what you've just shared which is, people are constantly trying to find the better way to do things and to innovate. And to couple that with the fact that there are some institutions out there that, I won't say that they've abandoned the licensing model, but they're almost willing to, and in some instances give away their technologies in exchange for like this sponsored research. So they would rather build that. And when I thought about it more, a lot of it comes down to how does each institution measure success? I keep my job by bringing in clients you keep your job by growing econ dev. Where you are now how do you think that, that region and your institution measure success and how does that overlay with the models that you're implementing?

Zach Miles:

A good loaded question, not a loaded question in a negative way. But tech transfer is hard, it really is. I don't think it's said enough that you have innovation or ideas, I shouldn't say innovations. You have ideas that are created through use of some type of funding mechanism that a lot of times stop there because the researchers are interested in coming up with an initial answer, but either some of the funding or interest or whatever else is not there to take it to the next level. So you've got these ideas that have a long path to have some type of an effect in many instances. And the universities that I think drove for it, it may have been a perverse incentive of, "Well, we just need to make revenue off of this. Maybe not giving you the entire resources that you need, but go out and get these things licensed."

Zach Miles:

And it's really changed to... Especially here too, when I talk with my boss about some of the metrics, it is more about impact in people's lives. And we spend more time talking about putting a building up at the research park that way collaborations can take place then. How much money are you bringing in or what's the increase in revenue? I think part of it is people are starting to realize that some of those licenses and some of those efforts will come if you have more of the relationship side and less of the transaction side, "So what do you need, and let's get it done. And let's not worry about some of these pieces, because it'll take care of itself in certain instances." Versus end up pitch an idea that maybe nobody in the commercial world has asked that question.

Zach Miles:

And then I get told a no, versus if I would've gone in and said, "Hey, we've got some tech, we've got some resources and students, and we've got a building and we've got some funding from the state and incentives and other programs. I could bring a package together, almost like a site selector on engaging with Oklahoma State University." That's a much better conversation and story, if you have leadership that's willing to accept it. Versus I just did a license or I just did a sponsored research agreement. And I think the industry is changing in this particular area. So you mentioned a few that are changing it, from either assignments or express agreements that some institutions are moving forward where I think you're looking at more of, we need to have impacts versus just holding onto what we've done in the past. And it will be interesting to see how the federal government reacts a bit to this.

Zach Miles:

And it'll be the first to proffer that you got a lot of money that goes into some of the basic research and you've got an SPR and STTR programs and EDA, which is great, but I think you start pumping more money into the translational and applied side and these types of engagements that I think you have more bang for your buck. And I think some of the critics of tech transfer start not to disappear, but some their criticisms are answered as to why are we not moving more out? Well, we need more of these relationship-driven, instead of just pushing things that may not make it. So yeah, the trends I think a lot of them, if you looked at it especially on the acceleration and incubation side, I think you'd find that there's probably a few things that were just missing.

Zach Miles:

Whether that was a larger corporate partner that's there to help support it, or some of the training that's necessary. I've seen a few of them that stand up a building, people have co-working space, but there's no program in and around and they shut down pretty quick. Well, it's nice to have free office space, but if you don't have guidance or access to resources, they shut down pretty quick. So I would venture, and this is just me personally, with a lot of those that haven't been successful, that missed a couple of the component pieces that are needed to help crank it.

Zach Miles:

But as you mentioned too, everyone's still trying to figure it out a bit. We're a nation, industry, my goal is the impetus behind it in the '80s. And so you're not longstanding, especially where there's been a lot of changes over the past 20 years, so I think they're still trying to figure that out. But more and more aligning. And I think this gets to the regional piece that we've talked about, that if I can leverage what you have and you can leverage what I have and we can help to smooth the graph a little bit, instead of having some outliers, I think it's going to be better for everybody.

Scott Marty:

That's interesting. And you started to touch on it. I thought you're going to go another step, so I'm going to put you on the spot here. You've had the opportunity to put together, set up, originate some of these incubators and accelerators, some fully on campus, some public private partnership. In looking back on putting those types of initiatives together, I think your term was the critical pieces, what would you identify as being, let's let's keep it simple, like three critical pieces to success of the incubator accelerator model?

Zach Miles:

Yeah. We may adjust this a little bit as we talk, and maybe my answer changes a little bit as we discuss it. But I first, I think you need to have some type of funnel of either great ideas, companies, whatever else that's coming into it. Two, you've got to have the right expertise, whether that be from government or locals are whoever else that can be there to impart wisdom and knowledge and support. And then you really do need some resources, these companies they need it. They need either the funding source or research grants. So I think if you can create a funnel somehow, whether that be from institutions that have great ideas that you're starting companies, or from the community. It was funny in Nevada, I think we missed most of the companies that were generated there because there wasn't... although there was some and there were some very unique ones, not like downtown Las Vegas, but there wasn't this catch, it wasn't the entry point for some of the startups. And so they'd go to coast and move out.

Zach Miles:

But I think if you can capture this flow in, have the right mentoring and guidance from state and others, and then some resources, I think we've got an interesting mix. Black Fire was like that, although it would've probably gave me a lot of gray hair more than I'd really like. Trying to have this large private partner with an institution created very interesting, at least in Las Vegas, conversation with companies that we've never engaged with or startups that had no idea how to get their product, either into a hospitality and entertainment resort. Or again, the Panasonic's and others that we had engaging with us, that you



have executives that are coming in to hear about those products. Where if you're missing some of those and some of the resources, I think you just start spinning your wheels a little bit, or you become frustrated because you're not moving forward or having access or having opportunities, and you have an interesting road ahead.

Zach Miles:

Which is why Oklahoma state really attracted me here, is some of the unique, especially Cowboy Technologies at the time. I heard about that at the university of Utah. And I think unless I'm completely wrong, that was one of the unique situations, even across the country, that there's this wholly owned private entity that was investing in companies. Where there's very few that were doing that or that were just getting started and putting that together. And so coming here and we're going through the processes of setting up Cowboy Innovations, which is our broader brand that includes tech transfer and industry engagement, the research park, and some our investment strategies. And we're looking at other donor pieces and mentoring groups and advisory groups that will be under that. There's just a huge amount of support for that.

Zach Miles:

And because these were part of a larger system, an A&M system pulls us on board and we've got outreach efforts in Oklahoma city. And we have over 70 different extension offices that are within the state. And if you want to know what's really keeping me up at night right now, ironically the tribes have a lot of hospitality and entertainment venues across the state, and so I didn't even think that Black Fire would apply. But I'll tell you what, that's taken on a bit of a life of its own here. And we could see something very similar to the research park that is along those lines in the near future. So it's been a lot of alignment that you just can't get. Utah... I don't want to single out different organizations or states necessarily, but you had this unique situation where everybody came together. Two thousands are still doing it, but at least when I was there, you're still there changing the world, but there were two thousands the 2014 time period, everyone just seemed to align and it was great.

Zach Miles:

And I think that's where you see these economic players or the development and diversification taking place, is you've got alignment from all of the stakeholders. They've had local communities, institutions that are coming together and wanting to do good. So I've been placed on a board for one of the state agencies to help try to figure it out. I think that's not unique, but to include the institutions and saying you're one of the partners that needs to be at the table to help figure out our economic development diversification strategy, sometimes I think they get left out of that conversation, even though they're one of the drivers. That was a lot of just everywhere, Scott. So I don't know if I answered the question or not.

Scott Marty:

No, you answered the question very quickly with your thread but then you gave us a lot of great insight I think behind that. I think that the successes that I've seen are really the collaboration of having to have state and local buy-in, so most of these higher education institutions have a local economy or local environment. Clearly they're all within the states here in the US so there's that. And then there's the federal government. And you touched on the Bayh-Dole, you touched on NSF, NIH funding and how difficult it is. It's many research dollars that come into these institutions, the ability to then take that basic research money. And I think you touched on this earlier also which is, there's an education that has to be done with higher education institutions, where it's a publish or perish type of environment. And being able to find a balance to reward innovation while also allowing the professors, the students, the grad students, the postdocs to succeed in their ultimate career, if they're going to stay in academics.

Scott Marty:

And sometimes you're fortunate enough to see some of those academics become entrepreneurs, but sometimes you have to find someone to hand that technology off to, they can then take it to that next step. And I think these incubators and accelerators that we've talked about, some of the funding mechanisms, the Cowboy tech and it sounds like this Cowboy innovations is going to have a role in saying, "Thank you involving those innovators going forward to whatever extent they

want to or can be involved, to then take it to that next level." So it's fun to see. And I've seen you do this very well at several institutions, so they're lucky to have you out there at OSU.

Zach Miles:

I hope so. I've renamed everything that we've got, so maybe you should talk a little bit more about that. But for Brightest Orange Ventures to the Office of technology commercialization. I think there's something about branding and changing it up a little bit, almost like a basketball teams or others always change their jerseys just to keep it fresh and people engaged. So we're really trying to do that and align everything and push it out and give it a new chapter. Because everybody builds a foundation and everyone's doing a great jobs with the new chapter here, what it is to engage with OSU and drive economic development and innovation. And to your point, I don't want to be the poster boy for this, well I'll mind my comments a little bit. But I think the communities are starting to figure it out a little bit too, that their tax dollars are going into fund these federal agencies that are then funding the universities.

Zach Miles:

And they're hard earned dollars starts to be more directed to publications and promotion and tenure. Which I'm not saying is wrong, but I think there's a push that will continue to take place as to, how is this basic research being translated to actually help my life? Which you can see plenty of examples from the universities, and then almost everything to a certain extent have some type of university attached to it, but I think you'll get more of these calls to action, that's great. The publications are fantastic, we need that. We need educators, we need academics, but there's this other piece that you need to really incentivize because it affects me, is funding the research that's there, that's taking place. And I want to see different outcomes than just publications, let's add to it, and if they exist harmoniously, it'd be great to incentivize it.

Scott Marty:

Well, it's interesting. I think now that we're hopefully coming up on the tail end of this pandemic I think that the pandemic was really a great opportunity to see how federally funded research at higher education institutions was being utilized. Whether it be to actually file a patent on a new diagnostic or new therapeutic, or even as simple as just running clinical trials at different institutions. And I'm hoping that there's something that the public learned from that. In the fact that these federal dollars, these federal incentives are applying to higher ed, as well as large pharma. Even though you saw many of the vaccines coming out of the names of big pharma, like Moderna and Pfizer and Johnson and Johnson.

Scott Marty:

But if you drill a little deeper, you'll actually find that some of that tech originated at different universities and that the clinical trials were being done on campus hospitals throughout the country. So hopefully this is public private relationship that you saw in something like in the gaming and hospitality out at UNLV and in Las Vegas, but then also through the pandemic, seeing some of that research and seeing that translate. Because I think what a lot of people miss is, these important innovations, whether it be a therapeutic, whether it be a device, whether it be software, Adobe. Adobe did not come out of Adobe, Adobe came out of a university. So you see those different technologies they're not always garage band innovations. That may be where the company started, but the innovation oftentimes does start with institutions like yours. Well, I always like to have a little bit of an aside during these podcasts, and because I like to eat, I always ask people, if I'm coming to visit you there and Stillwater where are we going to eat?

Zach Miles:

Yeah. No, that's a great question. We are going to go to the Atherton hotel and we're going to have a Las Vegas strip steak. Because the Las Vegas strip steak is not an innovation of Las Vegas, it's an innovation of Oklahoma. It's a different cut of meat that we will go and have the Las Vegas strip steak or Vegas strip steak. But it's Vegas something rather than we've licensed out. So that's where we will be going to eat initially. And then probably some type of chicken or barbecue. And I'm not entirely sure where, probably Bad Brad's is where we'll end up for barbecue and then probably Chick-fil-A for chicken, just to round out all of the great places that we have.

Scott Marty:

That makes it simple. Well, Zach I know you've got a million things to do, but as always, I love catching up and it was fun to do it in a formal environment like this. But before we sign off, I always like to also give my guests an opportunity to share any other initiatives, how to get in contact with you. Anything else that people are looking to learn a little bit more about what you're doing and where you're doing it and how you're doing? How do they get in touch with you?

Zach Miles:

Yeah. Definitely. So we are in the middle of redoing our website, so don't hold that against me when you reach out, but [cowboynnovations@okstate.edu](mailto:cowboynnovations@okstate.edu), is the email address to send. And then Cowboy Innovations, you'll be able to find us as soon as we have our new website up and running. And look for OSU office of economic development, and then you'll find us. But I'm hedging a little bit because the next couple of months we'll be even better for information that's there. But yeah, well as I stated before, we want to engage, we're open for business. We want to see how we can help, it's not just about some of the standard things that you think of with tech transfer and econ dev. We're interested in what the problem is or what you need and seeing how we can support it.

Zach Miles:

And all the great resources and other things that we can bring to bear. And look, I don't mean to blow any smoke, but not only you for doing these podcasts for getting the information out, but your firm has always been there for us over the years and not just providing legal services with all of the extra things that add to it and be a partner in it. So I appreciate you doing this and reaching out. I would be arrogant to not thank my boss at OSU, Kenneth Sewell for allowing me to do this and give me a little free rein on stuff. They're probably panicking a bit more than he'd like to be panicked, but so far I haven't caused a nervous breakdown. So we'll see what the future holds.

Scott Marty:

I'm excited to see what the future holds as well. It'll be a fun ride to watch and hopefully be a part of in the coming years. So with that, I'd like to say, thanks again to Zach Miles and to make sure that everyone listening to the podcast visit our website, [www.ballardspahr.com](http://www.ballardspahr.com), where you can find the latest news and guidance from all of our attorneys. You can subscribe to the show in Apple podcast, Google play, Spotify, or your favorite podcast platform. If you have any questions or suggestions for the show, please email [podcast@ballardspahr.com](mailto:podcast@ballardspahr.com). Stay tuned in for new episode coming soon. And again, thanks for listening.