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Professor David Crawford,
Deputy Director, Research and Enterprise

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research and collaboration with commercial impact



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Deputy Director, Research and Enterprise Manager

The University of Essex Research and Enterprise Office has a long history of working with Essex companies to add business value through collaborative research, knowledge transfer, access to expertise through consultancy, management training and conference facilities, as well as support for growing businesses and start-ups. The Research and Enterprise Office is based at the University’s main campus at Colchester, with additional facilities at the Southend-on-Sea campus.

The commercial impact of the University’s work is extremely important, according to Professor David Crawford, Deputy Director, Research and Enterprise. “Before we seek funding, we carefully consider the potential commercial impact of a research programme. That process also helps to identify both potential partners and sponsors. Essex companies can get involved by, for example, devoting an engineer to a project once a week. As an example, we’re working with a number of Essex technology companies on the use of advanced communications for programmes like assisted living and future networks.”

The University’s consultancy service gives local

companies the opportunity to tap into areas of expertise to support projects designed to improve profitability, productivity and competitiveness. One Essex company commissioned a three-week feasibility study that enabled them to make a significant reduction in their carbon footprint.

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs), a government-sponsored programme, strengthen collaboration even further, as David Crawford explains. “Our Business Development Managers visit networking events to find out what Essex companies are looking for from research. Where a KTP is appropriate, we arrange for a high-calibre graduate to work exclusively at the company for the duration of the project. In one example, a partnership is being set up that will enable an Essex manufacturer to draw on the University’s optical and robotics research to improve product through-life performance by replacing mechanical components with an optical solution.”

The Research and Enterprise Office also has a strong focus on growing businesses. “We work with independent start-ups as well as spinning out companies to exploit the commercial potential of

our own research discoveries,” says David Crawford. “The University has the facilities to support new businesses at the Business Incubation Centre, part of the Business Hub at the Southend campus. As well as office or development space, the Centre also offers advice and guidance to help businesses through the early stages.”

Looking to the future, innovation with impact is at the heart of the University’s new research park, the Knowledge Gateway, currently under development at the Colchester campus. It will create a community that supports research, training and knowledge transfer involving partners from the University, government and business. “The Knowledge Gateway will become a focal point for research with a global reach,” says David Crawford.

“It will bring together all the right resources and evaluate projects to ensure that they provide the best return both for the university and for the local region.”



All pictures courtesy of the University of Essex

INVEST Essex provides confidential advice and practical support to companies wanting to establish a presence or expand in the UK. We promote Essex as an outstanding business destination and help existing and potential investors make the most of our strategic location, thriving business environment, and quality of life.

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