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NEWS & VIEWS

A Huge THANK YOU From the T3 Office Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, OH

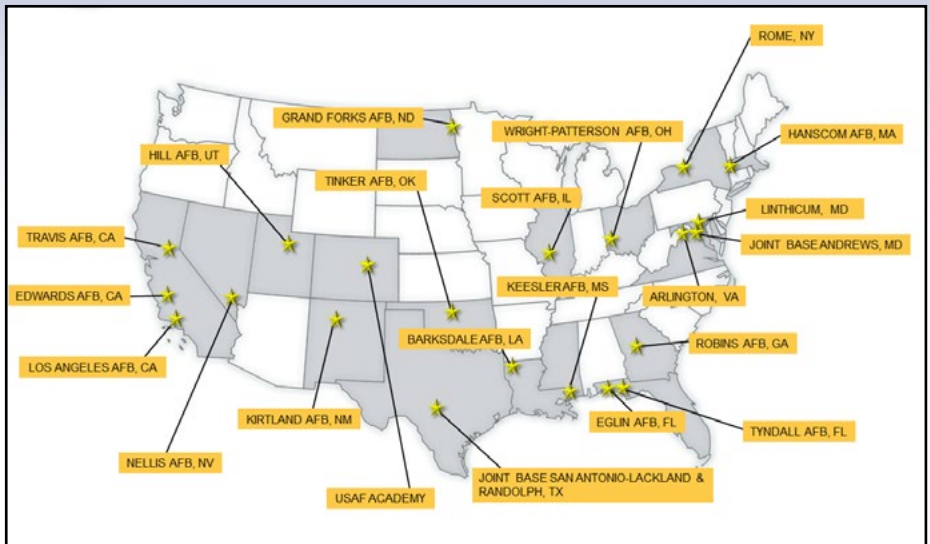
Throughout 2021, the Technology Transfer and Transition (T3) Office presented the technology community with stories highlighting the activities of various Office of Research and Technology Applications locations around the country. Each of the monthly stories focused on personal experiences and viewpoints provided by ORTA members themselves, adding the human element to the research and development functions carried out in their respective federal laboratories. The T3 office is providing a recap of the series this month and saying “Thank You” to all the members who agreed to be interviewed for the articles, while also giving appreciation to those who were not featured but have a huge impact as Air Force ORTA personnel.

Col Christopher McClernon, the Director of U.S. Air Force Academy’s Office of Research, was the first to be featured in the series and spoke of the responsibility his office fulfills as an ORTA. “My office has a very important responsibility to shed some of the administrative burden from our researchers and help guide them through this process,” he stated. One of his goals is to help his faculty members see the value in T3 programs, not become dismayed by upfront costs.

The costs associated with developing innovative ideas and products can be enormous, but for industry, academia, and other government entities who collaborate through any of the T3 mechanisms, the benefits of expanding technology clearly outweigh them. ORTAs are the focal point for those collaborators, and are required to serve as information brokers, liaisons to industry and academia, deal makers, and contract administrators. As we learned from Wright-Patterson Air Force Base’s Joshua Laravie, having a background in customer relationship management has proven to be a game-changer.

“I worked in various program management roles within the Air Force,” Laravie mentioned. “I also have extensive experience in customer relationship management, financial services, and business development. I enjoy helping external partners navigate the nuances of collaborating with the Air Force.”

With the size of Wright-Patterson and the ever-increasing number of technology corporations in the surrounding areas, Laravie is not alone, as the base has delegated authority for eleven ORTAs to manage the seemingly limitless number of partnering opportunities. Sarah Ricketts, John Shutte, and Jeremy Gratsch represent three of these ORTAs, and all expressed a similar sentiment as Laravie in assisting partners in and around Dayton, Ohio when sharing their experiences.



There are 43 Office of Research and Technology Applications branches in the United States, located in federal laboratories at 18 Air Force bases, the United States Air Force Academy, the Pentagon, and 2 government facilities. Each office consists of trained specialists to administer and manage the technology transfer functions for their dedicated laboratory within the federal government.

“There are instances when we think we’re really onto something in terms of finding the perfect collaborative partner or other activity that will propel our technology into the stratosphere, and sometimes it just doesn’t work out that way,” said Gratsch, from Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL) Materials and Manufacturing Directorate. “While the initial woes hit us...we pick it up and carry on in the pursuit of new opportunities.”

AFRL is headquartered at Wright-Patterson, with nine operating technical directorates in California, Florida, Hawaii, New Mexico, New York, and Virginia, in addition to Ohio. In our March edition, Bill Loux provided insight into his ORTA’s areas of focus and one of their challenges at the Munitions Directorate at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida.

“Our biggest challenge has been educating our scientists and engineers about the value of protecting Air Force intellectual property and the process involved in patenting their inventions,” remarked Loux.

Scientists, engineers, and inventors alike, invest countless hours in developing technologies but sometimes overlook the development and marketability aspects that follow, which underscores the essential ORTA responsibility of serving as the custodian of the Activity’s intellectual property. Managing patents and other intellectual property,

or IP, requires continuous interaction with local legal offices to obtain invention disclosures and confirmation of licensing fees and royalty payments.

The role legal offices play in transferring technology is paramount to the sustainability of the ORTA program. Medical technology is no different where, according to Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland's Medical Modernization Program Analyst Joseph Lynch, ORTA professionals are committed to providing military researchers the best amount of support. "[We are] establishing collaborative partnerships," Lynch added, "to address military medical needs/requirements with the best solutions possible while leveraging diverse resources and promoting bilateral transfer of technology between federal, state, private, public, and non-profit organizations."

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in early 2020, medical technology to combat the virus became the nation's top priority, seemingly strengthening the relationship between ORTAs and legal offices. Jessica Cromheecke at Travis Air Force Base's David Grant Medical Center in California experienced this bond first-hand.

"Working with [Intellectual Property Law Division] in early April 2020, we were able to get an agreement signed within three days from the Secretary of Air Force Acquisitions," Cromheecke stated, enabling her Clinical Investigation Facility to provide equipment to double the daily COVID-19 testing capability of a local public health laboratory.

Also featured this year was the Department of Defense Cyber Crime Center (DC3), a field operating agency and Air Force laboratory under the Air Force Inspector General. John McCann represented this DoD Center of Excellence in June's edition by showcasing the uniqueness of his ORTA. "DC3 is not the typical ORTA, but the significance of DC3 technology development in the field of digital forensics technology and standards has international and national impact," McCann offered.

McCann's ORTA has collaborated with several educational institutions and signed into Cooperative Research and Development Agreements (CRADA) with other organizations. CRADAs, along with Education Partnership, Commercial Test, Information Transfer, Material Transfer, Partnership Intermediary, and Patent License agreements, are mechanism by which T3 enables partnering with industry and academia. By law, 15 USC §3710, federal agencies are required to attempt to transfer their inventions to industry "to ensure the full use of the results of the nation's federal investment in research and development."

Under this federal code, the Air Force Sustainment Center (AFSC) at Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma was recently awarded delegated authority to perform ORTA functions. Donna Stacy, who previously worked as a process engineer in the Air Logistics Complex at Tinker, provided a viewpoint of the office from a novice perspective. Although her position and the ORTA are in the beginning stages, the department worked technology insertion projects for years before becoming a technology transfer office, making the transition fairly seamless.

"When we realized how much we could do with technology transfer we started to pursue more T2 resources and decided to stand up an ORTA to encourage more tech transfer within AFSC," Stacy mentioned.

AFSC was the last ORTA presented in the series, but the list of ORTA's is more extensive than the ten agencies featured throughout the year. The T3 website, <https://www.aft3.af.mil/>, provides a map depicting all 43 locations, as well as the downloadable Air Force Technology Handbook which provides details on all aspects of the program from policies and procedures to royalties and benefits.

The T3 office would like to, again, thank all the ORTA members who participated in this year's ExtraORTAnary News & Views feature, and extend their gratitude to all in the technology community who read, shared, and supported the series.



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