

## **Best Practices: Creating Alliances and Securing Projects from Industry**

*By David S. Bushnell, Bowie State University and Lisbeth Borbye, North Carolina State University*

### **Q: How to map employer needs?**

A: Identify potential employers and their needs by mapping employer locations; attending professional association meetings; contacting alumni and faculty with industry links; and forming employer focus groups. Then follow-up with employers by mail or telephone surveys, debrief students who worked as interns and seek face-to-face contact at professional association meetings. Each of these strategies will result in a listing of needs and opportunities involving potential employers who have a need for graduates with both scientific and business knowledge and skills.

### **Q: How to contact and work with employers?**

A: Network with and interview employer representatives at career fairs and professional society meetings; follow-up alumni and faculty contacts; invite employer professionals to serve as adjunct professors or student mentors; launch seminars and workshops with employer involvement; promote PSM as a vehicle for economic growth and convene meetings of university presidents and presidents of local companies with a focus on PSM. Conducting cold-calls and setting up face-to-face meetings have been used by some institutions as contact strategies, appropriate thank you notes or follow up calls can help to continue dialogue with corporate representatives.

### **Q: How to get support?**

A: In addition to mapping employer needs and working directly with employers, some institutions have been successful in soliciting dollar grants and contributions. Asking for matching grants was found to be appropriate once initial grants from foundations and government sources were obtained. Other suggestions were to contact company foundations, to market scholarships and fellowships to local employers, to solicit tuition reimbursement of company based college attendees, to offer certificate courses to current employees, to get states to pass tax incentives for employer contributions, and to convince employers of the cost/benefits associated with providing monetary support to students.