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Editorial: UNM Is a Catalyst For Future R&D Growth

Does New Mexico have a Silicon Valley in its headlights? Maybe someday, if the growing number of patents coming from New Mexico's technical innovation centers are any indication.

The University of New Mexico, in cooperation with the Sandia National Laboratories and Los Alamos National Laboratory, is nurturing an ecosystem necessary to support start-up technology companies. To flourish, this ecosystem — in addition to the researchers and scientists who come up with the ideas and inventions — requires patent attorneys, venture capitalists, entrepreneurs, business managers and manufacturing and marketing experts.

Since June 2010, nine patents have been awarded to research affiliated with the UNM Cancer Center. Additionally, 14 patents were awarded to other UNM researchers during the 2010-11 academic year. Each year, STC.UNM, the university's nonprofit company, forms between five and eight new companies to create commercial ventures based on UNM patents.

New Mexico offers a climate of collaboration between researchers from different fields and institutions and a history of energy-related research and development and medical and life science research. Hot fields are nanotechnology, microsystems, biomedical engineering and nuclear medicine.

Success for start-ups here will depend upon how fast the ecosystem grows by luring the experts who can turn researchers' dreams into commercial products and innovative techniques that have practical applications that move society forward.

This vision and support for thinking out of the box is a bright spot in New Mexico's economic landscape.

This editorial first appeared in the Albuquerque Journal. It was written by members of the editorial board and is unsigned as it represents the opinion of the newspaper rather than the writers.