

2026 Impact Report



Dear Colleagues, Partners, and Friends,

Every innovation begins with a question. A researcher seeking a better treatment for disease. An engineer imagining a more efficient process. A scientist pursuing a breakthrough with the potential to transform an industry. In those early moments of discovery, the ultimate impact is often unknown. Yet with the right support, partnerships, and persistence, those innovations can become technologies and products that improve lives, strengthen communities, and drive impact.

At KU's Center for Technology Commercialization, we have the privilege of helping inform that journey from discovery to impact. Each year, KU researchers and our partners demonstrate the extraordinary potential of university innovation. In 2026, we continued to strengthen KU's technology transfer foundation and engage with our ecosystem to expand partnerships, support entrepreneurs, and accelerate pathways for commercialization.

The accomplishments highlighted in this report represent far more than numbers. Every invention disclosure, patent application, license agreement, and startup company reflects the dedication of innovators committed to solving important problems and a community of supporters across KU and our region. As we look ahead, the pace of technological advancement continues to accelerate. Emerging opportunities in health care, artificial intelligence, energy, and materials underscore the critical role universities play in developing solutions to society's most pressing challenges. We remain committed to fostering innovation, reducing barriers to commercialization, and creating opportunities for KU discoveries to achieve their fullest impact.

Together, we are transforming ideas into impact and building a stronger future through innovation.

Clifford Michaels, PhD, CLP, RTTP
Executive Director, KUCTC

Below: Clifford Michaels, PhD, CLP, RTTP
Executive Director, KUCTC



OUR ROLE IN INNOVATION AT KU

We support innovation across the University of Kansas including KU Medical Center by providing a robust technology commercialization infrastructure that helps identify, protect and advance promising discoveries from research to real-world impact. Serving as a vital connector within KU’s innovation ecosystem, we work with our researchers, industry partners and entrepreneurial support organizations to secure intellectual property protection, negotiate licenses, foster startup formation and support industry engagement. By leveraging KU’s strengths, talent and collaborative networks, we help transform innovations into new products, ventures and societal benefits while making informed, transparent decisions that maximize the potential for public impact and long-term success.

OUR INNOVATION IMPACTS IN 2026

- p.4** **LOWERING BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT**
improving the ways in which our researchers and partners engage
- p.5** **RECEIVING NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR KU INVENTORS**
strengthening the university’s reputation for innovation
- p.6** **SUSTAINING GROWTH IN OUR PIPELINE**
visualizing our impact by the numbers
- p.7** **SUPPORTING STARTUPS FINDING SUCCESS**
commercializing research through spinoffs
- p.8** **ADVANCING TECHNOLOGY TO MARKET**
creating the next great opportunity

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LOWERING BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT



In 2026 KUUCTC continued its efforts to lower barriers and improve how researchers and partners engage with KUUCTC. For a technology transfer office like KUUCTC, reducing perceived barriers helps increase the number, quality and diversity of innovations that reach commercialization. When engagement feels difficult, many partners simply don't engage, causing missed opportunities to bring innovations to market and create real-world impact.

A New Way to Disclose

The days of submitting paper forms and PDFs are over. KUUCTC launched a streamlined online portal that provides all researchers with a new way to disclose inventions to KUUCTC. Researchers, students and clinicians already conduct much of their work online and routinely complete electronic forms and questionnaires as part of their research activities. The portal aligns with these existing workflows, reducing effort and uncertainty while allowing researchers to submit disclosures anytime, anywhere.

Accelerating Startup Negotiations

Revised and relaunched in 2026, KUUCTC's Swift Startup License and Swift Startup Option are low-friction, ready-to-use agreements designed for qualifying KU startup companies developing KU intellectual property. New in 2026, the Swift Startup Option provides an early-stage startup with a ready-to-use agreement while it refines its business and commercialization strategies. The Swift Startup Option gives a KU startup an exclusive, limited period to evaluate the KU technology and intellectual property of interest under a standard set of terms and at a manageable cost. The refreshed Swift Startup License enables KU startups to move quickly as they develop and commercialize KU technology and intellectual property. The license is structured to balance the needs of startup companies and KU while minimizing negotiations.

Plotting a Path Forward

For researchers considering commercializing their own discoveries, the path from the lab to a startup can seem daunting. In addition to the challenges faced by all startup companies, such as talent acquisition, business planning and funding, researchers must navigate additional considerations as they transition from innovator to entrepreneur. In 2026, KUUCTC launched a new section of its website dedicated to helping prospective founders understand the commercialization process. The resource provides an overview of key considerations for any company founder, along with guidance tailored to researchers and faculty members who seek to maintain their roles at KU while launching a company.

Building a Partnership

Negotiating a license with the university doesn't have to be an intimidating process. In fact, many license agreements move more quickly than prospective partners expect. KUUCTC's Exclusive License Guide addresses common misconceptions about university licensing and provides a straightforward overview of what partners can expect when licensing KU intellectual property. Bringing innovation to market should be about building momentum together, not navigating misunderstandings.

National Recognition

For University of Kansas Inventors

The University of Kansas continued to strengthen its national reputation for innovation and commercialization in 2026 through significant recognition from the National Academy of Inventors. These achievements reflect the growing impact of KU researchers and inventors and underscore the university's commitment to translating discoveries into technologies that improve lives and drive economic development.

Below: Steven Soper, PhD
Foundation Distinguished Professor



A New NAI Fellow

Steven Soper, Foundation Distinguished Professor of Chemistry and Mechanical Engineering, was named to the 2025 class of National Academy of Inventors (NAI) Fellows, the highest professional distinction awarded exclusively to academic inventors. Soper's pioneering work in precision medicine, including the development of lab-on-a-chip technologies for diagnostics related to cancer, stroke and infectious diseases, has led to more than 20 patents and the launch of multiple startup companies.

Two New NAI Senior Members

KU's inventor community received additional recognition in 2026 when Lisa Stehno-Bittel and Elizabeth "Lisa" Friis were named NAI Senior Members. The distinction recognizes inventors who have demonstrated success in developing, patenting and commercializing technologies with the potential to benefit society. Stehno-Bittel was recognized for innovations in diabetes research, cell therapy and biotechnology entrepreneurship, while Friis was honored for contributions to medical device innovation, commercialization and technology entrepreneurship education. Their selection highlights the breadth of innovation across KU and the critical role faculty inventors play in mentoring the next generation of innovators.



Above: Lisa Stehno-Bittel, PhD
President & Co-Founder, Likarda, LLC
Former Chair & Professor, PT & Rehab Science

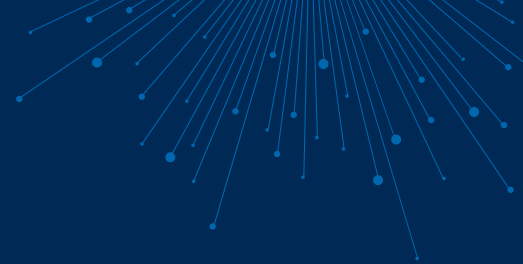


Above: Elizabeth "Lisa" Friis, PhD
Chair & Professor, Mechanical Engineering

Continued Recognition for KU

In 2026, NAI ranked KU 39th among public universities nationwide for utility patents granted, marking the fourth consecutive year the university has appeared among NAI's Top 100 U.S. Universities for Patents.

39th



KUCTC HIGHLIGHTS

29

License Agreements
that help move KU
innovations towards
commercialization

4

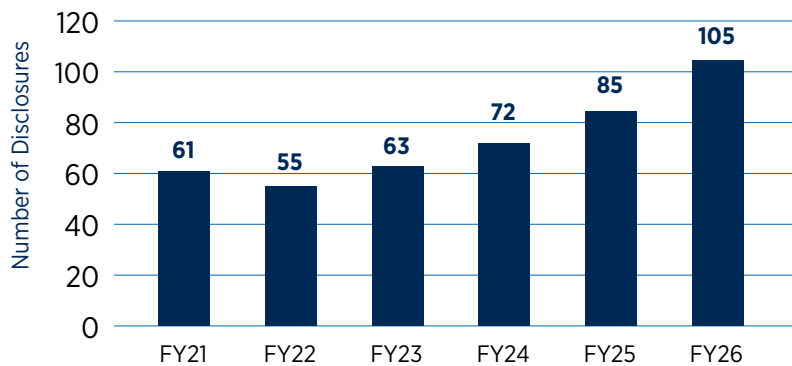
New Startups
in FY2026

52

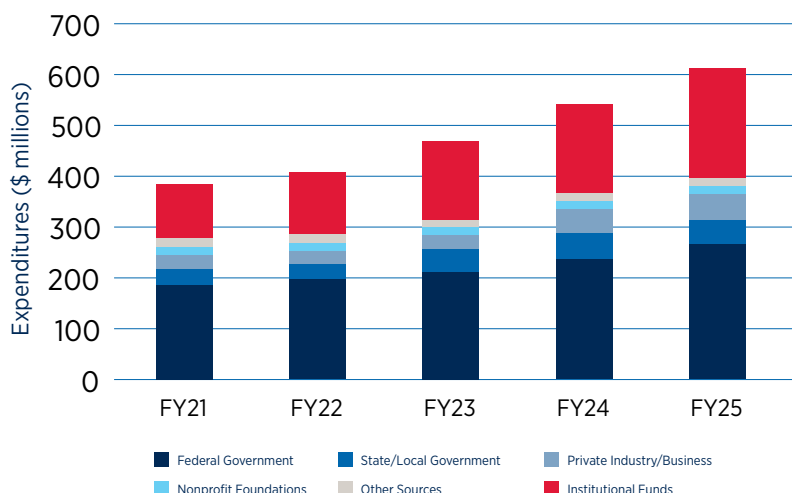
New Faculty
Innovators
engaged with KUCTC

Impact by the Numbers

Invention Disclosures



R&D Expenditures by Type



Startup Successes



Axioforce, Inc. is a KU startup developing force-sensing technologies for sports performance, biomechanics, robotics and health care. In FY2026, the company expanded its product portfolio, taking its Axiocell™ technology in new directions. Building on its original LaunchPad™ 3D Portable Force Plate, the company launched two new products: Ascent, which incorporates force-sensing technology into an MLB-regulation pitching mound to capture the forces generated throughout the pitching motion, and force-sensing Batter's Boxes, which embed the technology into a regulation batter's box for hitting development and biomechanical analysis. Axioforce was also featured in AUTM's "Better World" project, which highlights university innovations that improve lives.

58

Active Startups
as of June 2026



Icorium Engineering is a KU startup focused on reclaiming and purifying refrigerants through proprietary separation technologies. In FY2026, the company received a \$1.2 million National Science Foundation Small Business Innovation Research Phase II grant. The funding will help scale Icorium's separation technology from pilot operations to commercial deployment. Icorium was also named one of Startland News' "10 Kansas City Startups to Watch." The recognition underscores the company's potential to address significant environmental challenges associated with refrigerant waste and emissions.



Bond Biosciences, Inc. is a clinical-stage biopharmaceutical company and KU startup. Its lead program, BBI-001, is an oral therapy under development for hereditary hemochromatosis, a genetic disorder that causes the body to absorb too much iron. In FY2026, the company completed a financing round that raised more than \$5 million to support the continued clinical development of BBI-001. The therapy is designed to bind excess iron locally in the gastrointestinal tract, helping address the underlying cause of the disease.

Wrapping Up Rock Chalk Ready



Building on the program's inaugural year in 2025, six projects in 2026 were completed as part of KUCTC's "Rock Chalk Ready" Opportunity Development Program. The program provided awards of up to \$35,000 to help researchers address critical technical and commercialization milestones. By supplying targeted resources at pivotal stages of development, the fund helps bridge the gap between academic discovery and real-world impact. Of the six completed projects, one is already advancing toward startup formation and technology licensing, while several others continue to show strong commercialization potential. Collectively, the projects demonstrate the program's value in reducing risk and accelerating decision-making for emerging technologies.

Program Highlights

6 Projects Funded

across biotech, medtech, agriculture, energy and advanced materials

4 New Patent Applications Filed

3 Projects Participated

in KU's Regional NSF I-Corps program; two participated in KU Innovation Park's Lab2Market accelerator

1 Startup Company Formed

and entering licensing negotiations with KU; two others continue on a path toward new venture creation

This portfolio demonstrates how strategic gap funding helps transform university discoveries into intellectual property, startup companies, licensing opportunities and innovations capable of delivering economic and societal impact.

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Questions? Contact us.



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This annual report highlights key information and activities pertaining to KU Center for Technology Commercialization.

For other annual reports, visit our website at:

<https://research.ku.edu/about-kuctc>.

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KU

CENTER FOR TECHNOLOGY COMMERCIALIZATION

The University of Kansas

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2026. KU Center for Technology Commercialization.