



Rethinking Outsourcing: A Strategic Partnership to Grow STEM Graduate Enrolments

Jasbir Dhaliwal, PhD.
Executive Vice President for Research & Innovation
(Ex-Vice Provost for Academic Affairs & Dean, Graduate School)
University of Memphis



UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS

GRADUATE SCHOOL

- Approximately 4500 graduate students with a 10% growth the last three years (institutional target is one of four students must be a graduate student)
- Largest graduate school in the Mid-South region
- 122 graduate programs – doctoral (31), masters (56) and graduate certificates (35)
- Comprehensive university without a medical school – High Level of Research Activity and knocking on the doors of Carnegie R1 status
- More than 22 graduate programs ranked by U.S. News & World Report
- New Dean of the Graduate School: Dr. Robin Poston

UofM Launches FedEx IT Command Center on Campus to Grow Regional Data Analytics Workforce

June 19, 2018 - UMRF Ventures, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the University of Memphis Research Foundation, has hired 45 UofM graduate students primarily specializing in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) to work on campus with FedEx IT employees from their IT Command Center Team. The result of this collaboration is a UMRF Ventures-operated FedEx IT Command Center - Systems Analytics Group opening June 20 at the FedEx Institute of Technology on campus.

"We are very thankful for FedEx's continued overwhelming support and presence on our campuses," said UofM President M. David Rudd. "The FedEx IT Command Center provides another wonderful venue for our graduate students to not only gain valuable work experience but to earn wages to help make college more affordable."

The student-run IT Command Center will operate seven days a week. The students will use advanced software technologies to analyze, inspect, troubleshoot and interpret operational and network performance data on a real-time basis, as well as work to identify opportunities for IT systems improvements.

"This is yet another example of FedEx making a positive difference on our campus and in our community," said Tom Kadien, CEO of UMRF Ventures. "These graduate students will have a terrific work experience alongside FedEx professionals, and it will help them secure better jobs in the future."

"This latest initiative represents the third step of a broader collaboration by the two parties - with the first two focusing on student-operated FedEx call centers at both the Memphis and Lambuth campuses of the University."





The UMRF Ventures FedEx IT Command Center – Systems Analytics provides University of Memphis graduate students the opportunity to:

- use advanced software technologies to analyze system performance data
- identify opportunities for improvement of FedEx systems and processes
- work alongside FedEx IT professionals in positions that familiarize them with the work and organization of the largest employer in Memphis

In order to build this culture of excellence, students will be:

- master the principles of the **Purple Promise**
- led through the Quality Driven Management principles adopted by FedEx
- encouraged to develop themselves technically and professionally
- fast-tracked for employment based on work performance
- Receive incentives based on academic performance



This IT Command Center will serve as one of the cornerstones of the University District's economic revitalization efforts and to serve as a model for **recruiting STEM talent to graduate programs.**

Surpluses from UMRF Ventures are plowed back into a university research fund.



+ Students who work, live and study on campus are more engaged and have higher GPAs than those who are not;

+ Graduate students paid about \$25 to \$30 an hour;

+ Work schedules are set around class times;

+ IT command center is student operated and managed;

+ Recruitment focus is on students who would not otherwise afford graduate school.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 31, 2018

UMRF Ventures Inc. Receives National Award for Regional and Economic Development

A University of Memphis Research Foundation Ventures Inc. program has received the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) 2018 Excellence and Innovation Award for Regional and Economic Development.

The award recognizes institutions that demonstrate excellence and innovation in their approach to student success, regional and economic development, international education, teacher education, and leadership in development and diversity.

“Many students are financially challenged, which has impacted UofM’s graduation rates,” said the AASCU in a statement announcing the award. “To combat these challenges, UofM founded UMRF Ventures Inc. to provide third-party IT service and support to corporations by hiring full-time undergraduate and graduate students. These student employees earn \$15 per hour, which helps them with tuition and living expenses. The UofM hopes the program will not only improve its graduation rate, but will also create a talent pool to address employment gaps within Memphis.”

UMRF Ventures is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the University of Memphis Research Foundation. As a for-profit limited liability corporation, UMRF Ventures facilitates unique collaborations with corporations, agencies, and organizations that help to grow Memphis.



LESSONS LEARNT:

- **Message to Corporate America:** Engage your local graduate school before you consider outsourcing any sophisticated and well-paying white-collar jobs away from your region – especially during times of full employment;
- **Message to Graduate Schools:** Develop the infrastructure and competencies to engage with regional stakeholders to bring meaningful graduate student work to campus;
- Universities are not passive producers of graduates – graduate schools have a role in regional economic development and we have a responsibility to help minimize graduate student debt;
- Besides traditional academic affairs, modern graduate schools may need to reach out to and build stronger partnerships with economic development, research and innovation units on campus;
- Graduate schools have a direct role to play in the development of research parks in university districts and in engaging regional communities;
- In an environment when lesser and lesser number of doctoral students are going on to join the professoriate, we need to help them develop alternative career paths while growing the regional workforce in new areas of the future;
- The line between school and work could be blurring for the benefit of our students;
- The ability of our students to be multidisciplinary and work across interdisciplinary boundaries should never be underestimated. They ARE able to study/research in one academic discipline while “working” and contributing to another.