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# **Industry/University Collaboration**

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## MERL/University Collaborations

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- MERL believes that open collaboration is vital for science
- MERL Researchers - 65
- MERL/University Collaborations - 35-40
  - Perhaps 10% of MERL researcher time is in collaborative projects
  - Around 2/3 include consulting fees, grants, or gifts from MERL
    - This is typically not full funding for the effort
    - Around 5% of MERL's budget is spent on this
- Students spending time at MERL - 40-50 per year
  - Perhaps 5% of researcher time is spent on supervision
  - Typical stay: 3 months (but sometimes much longer)
    - Around 5% of MERL's budget goes to pay student interns

## Intellectual Property Hassles

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- What MERL would like
  - Free use of anything it pays for
  - Used to be easy to get, now is hard
- MERL's IP Bottom Line
  - IP developed by MERL employees is MERL's
    - This includes students temporarily working as MERL employees
  - In collaborations, MERL falls back on basic US patent law
    - If MERL invents it alone it's MERL's sole property
    - If we invent it jointly, MERL has unfettered use

## The Worst of Collaborations

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- MERL management decides “wouldn’t it be great if MERL collaborated with institution X” and throws money over the wall to X
- No real collaboration takes place because there is no researcher at MERL that works with a researcher at X
- X gets some benefit from some money
  - But does not get any collaboration or technology transfer
- MERL gets next to nothing
  - At any rate, a lot less than it would get with an appropriate collaboration-minded researcher reading the open literature

## The Best of Collaborations

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- A MERL researcher and a researcher from institution X work together because they are both leaders in a field and can do work together that neither can do alone
- MERL management accelerates the work by providing support to X
- One or more students from X spend time at MERL
- The work is part of a long-term, win-win relationship between MERL and X
- All the results are open and published and make a step forward in technology to the advantage of both parties

## Conclusion

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- Fundamentally, collaboration is not about
  - Funding - Funding is nice and MERL is happy to provide it, but it is neither necessary nor sufficient for good collaboration
  - IP agreements - Patents and copyrights enable openness instead of secrecy, but the current climate makes agreement hard
- Fundamentally collaboration is about
  - People working closely together - Even if a lab is subcontracting research, it won't work if people don't collaborate
  - Advancing science - Let's not argue about the crumbs in a zero-sum game, let's make the cake bigger
    - This is the prize we should keep our eyes firmly on in the global research effort