OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT

ANNUAL REPORT

Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2026

a year's overview

WHERE WE ARE

A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

As the Director of the Office of Technology Management (OTM), it is my pleasure to welcome you to our FY2026 Annual Report, an overview of our team's achievements and the growing innovation ecosystem we're proud to support at Mississippi State University. Over the past year, OTM has continued to expand its services and deepen its impact across campus and beyond, ensuring that MSU remains a leader in transforming ideas into real-world impact.

Throughout FY2026, the Office of Technology Management (OTM) continued to strengthen Mississippi State University's innovation ecosystem by connecting researchers, entrepreneurs, industry partners, and government stakeholders to move discoveries from the lab to the marketplace. OTM supported the full spectrum of technology transfer activities, including intellectual property protection, licensing, agreement management, commercialization planning, and industry engagement. In FY 2026 we saw a **31%** increase in disclosures filed.

The year also reflected OTM's growing role in entrepreneurship and economic development. Through continued involvement in NSF I-Corps and collaboration with campus and external partners, the office helped researchers explore market opportunities, customer discovery, startup formation, and translational research funding. OTM also contributed to strategic discussions surrounding emerging innovation initiatives and technology acceleration opportunities that can expand the impact of MSU research.

As Mississippi State's Open-Source Program Office (OSPO), OTM further expanded support for software, data, and open-source innovation. The team provided guidance on licensing, compliance, project governance, and commercialization pathways, ensuring researchers have multiple options for translating their innovations into public benefit. These efforts reflect the evolving nature of research commercialization and OTM's commitment to supporting both traditional and emerging forms of intellectual property.

Often, we hear the same question: What does OTM actually do? Simply put, OTM helps transform ideas into impact. This year, I want to showcase the people behind this work and the projects they are most proud to have supported during FY2026.

At OTM, we are proud to serve the taxpayers who invest in research, the university that drives discovery, and the private-sector partners who help bring innovation to the world. Thank you for allowing us to play a role in transforming ideas into impact.

John Walters
Director, Office of Technology Management
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OTM FY26 Event Accomplishments

In a landmark year for innovation, OTM processed a record **63** invention disclosures. This success was driven in part by our team's continued efforts in outreach and education with the MSU research community. In addition, the new Cayuse system implemented by the Office of Sponsored Programs help raise the visibility of potential inventions derived from research.

The team also managed a significant volume of agreements to facilitate research and commercialization. Over the fiscal year, OTM executed or began negotiations on 57 agreements. This included 20 Material Transfer Agreements and 18 Non-Disclosure Agreements, which are crucial for fostering collaboration. The team also handled a diverse range of licensing agreements, including exclusive licenses, option agreements, and amended licenses, alongside inter-institutional agreements and other contracts vital to moving MSU technology forward.

Team Highlights

What does OTM do? Let's hear from our team members about some of their experiences this year:

Austin Check
Assistant Director
austin.check@msstate.edu

OTM Leads the OSPO for MSU

In FY'26 I was especially proud of OTM's deliberate expansion into open-source software and the designation of MSU's Open-Source Program Office (OSPO). These important products of research carry MSU's impact far beyond the university and efforts to grow the ecosystems of these projects have already yielded a ROI of over $600,000 in additional research funding.

Furthermore, our collaborative engagement with industry continues to grow on 3 fronts:

1. I-Corps programming is preparing faculty and staff to develop solutions for the commercial market that have a strong understanding of the end consumer.
2. MSU leads the way on SBIR/STTR programming to engage the small business community of Mississippi to participate in these valuable programs and provide a stronger relationship with the small STEM business community and the IHE's.
3. Entrepreneurial Outreach: Working with the MSU E-Center, we are now engaging the next generation of entrepreneurs at the high-school level to get them excited about creating opportunities and growing the State of Mississippi.

a year's overview

Tasha Bibb
Senior Program Manager
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Startup Expedition: Building a Pipeline from Ideas to Commercialization

A major accomplishment for MSU@MCITy was the continued growth of **Startup Expedition**, a three-phase entrepreneurship pipeline designed to move participants from idea exploration to validation, business development, and competition. Through Startup Basecamp, Elevate, and Ascent, entrepreneurs explored university intellectual property, tested business ideas through customer discovery and prototyping, and prepared for the marketplace.

The program culminated in **DAWG Tank 2026**, featuring 20 teams across Innovation, Main Street, and High School divisions and awarding $18,800 in prize funding. A particular highlight was the inaugural Entrepreneur Bootcamp for students from all three Vicksburg high schools. Two of the top three winners in the Statewide High School segment of MSU's Startup Summit were Vicksburg-Warren County students who advanced through this pipeline.

Startup Expedition strengthens the connection between **research, intellectual property, entrepreneurs, and the marketplace**, creating new pathways for technology commercialization while helping build Mississippi's next generation of entrepreneurs.

Leland Rice: From Research to the Farm

After years of research, setbacks, and persistence, Mississippi State's rice breeding program is seeing its latest cultivar, **Leland**, move from research plots to commercial production. Originally targeted for release in 2020, the program was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic and challenges including reduced rice acreage, fluctuating market prices, and increasing competition from hybrid rice. Through continued departmental collaboration, Foundation seed production resumed in 2022, putting Leland back on track.

Leland addresses an important challenge facing rice growers by offering an alternative focused on **grain quality and milling performance**. In 2027, one of our licensees will market Leland planting seed in its first true commercial sale. Leland's journey demonstrates how sustained research, teamwork, and perseverance can move university innovation from the laboratory and research field to the farm.

Jim Mitchell
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Andre Kemp
Project Manager
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From Internal Tool to University Intellectual Property

One of my most significant accomplishments of FY26 was the development and official disclosure of an iEdison reporting software tool designed to simplify federal compliance reporting. The software automates the generation of formatted Excel templates and structured bulk-upload files required by the federal iEdison platform, transforming a tedious and error-prone manual process into a more efficient and accurate workflow.

Beyond its operational impact, the project marked an important professional milestone: it was my first comprehensive software solution independently designed, developed, and packaged from start to finish, and it became my first technology disclosure with Mississippi State University.

The accomplishment demonstrates how solutions developed to address internal operational challenges can evolve into formal university intellectual property with potential value beyond their original application. It also reflects OTM's commitment to recognizing and advancing innovation that emerges from within the university itself.

Finding a Market for Modified Biochar

When researchers developed a modified biochar capable of converting nutrients from eutrophic water into fertilizer, the technology faced a commercialization challenge: its production cost was too high for conventional agricultural applications. Rather than viewing the technology as a dead end, OTM helped the research team identify a **higher-value market where its unique capabilities could justify the cost: natural swimming pools**.

These environmentally friendly pools rely on plants and biofilms rather than chlorine or salt, but controlling phosphorus and preventing algal blooms remains a significant challenge. OTM identified a prospective licensee, connected the company with the researchers, and facilitated the evaluation of the technology by providing samples under a **Material Testing Agreement**.

The effort demonstrates OTM's role in finding unexpected markets for university research and turning commercialization challenges into new opportunities for researchers and industry partners.

Nate Venarske
Licensing Associate
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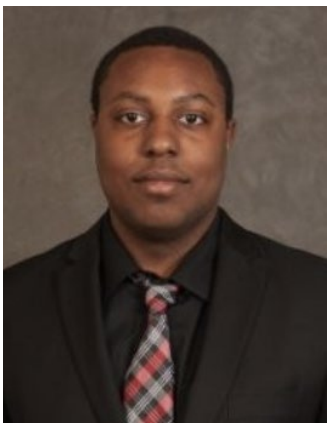

Andrew Grande-Pierre
Licensing Associate
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Building Commercialization Partnerships for Emerging Technologies

After joining Mississippi State University's Office of Technology Management in April 2026, I was excited to begin building connections between research, philanthropy, and entrepreneurship. One project I am especially proud of involved working with 2026 American Innovator Award recipient Dr. Colleen Scott to help secure the *Chemistry Research Fund for Excellence*, providing additional support for the continued development of her innovative technology.

I also helped advance the technology toward commercialization through a licensing agreement with an MSU startup, Clarus Labs. Clarus Labs is developing chemical testing solutions focused on oxidation testing for meat-based pet food, creating a pathway for addressing a significant industry need.

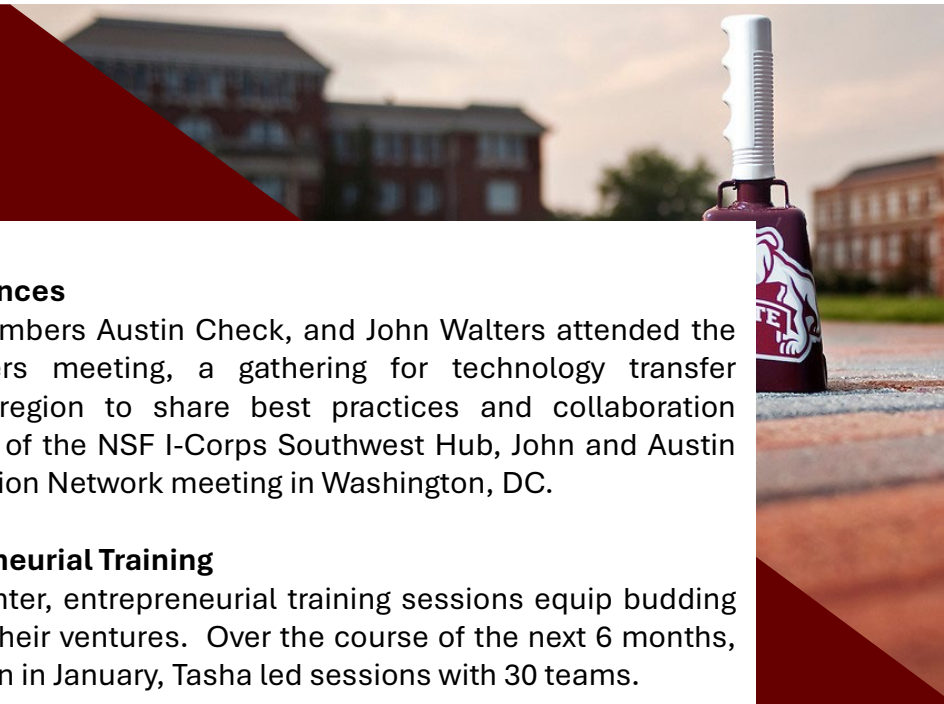
My first months at OTM have reinforced the importance of connecting researchers with donors, entrepreneurs, and industry partners to move promising technologies from the university into the marketplace, where they can create lasting impact.

As I begin my 3rd year at OTM, I serve as the Junior Associate of Marketing and Graphic Design in the Office of Technology Management at Mississippi State University. In this role, I act as the liaison between our office and SPA, ensuring smooth communication and coordination. I also develop visual content and graphics for our social media platforms, highlighting newly released technologies and supporting our outreach and engagement efforts.

Ashlynn Ledford
Junior Associate

Adalyn Anderson
Junior Associate

Over the past year at OTM, I have supported both the office's intellectual property and financial functions. My responsibilities include reviewing and organizing daily patent correspondence, maintaining accurate records in Minuet, processing weekly law firm payables, updating financial records, and creating and monitoring receivables to support revenue distributions. One of my biggest accomplishments this year has been becoming more confident and independent in navigating Minuet, which was challenging for me when I first started. Overall, I have developed a stronger understanding of OTM's processes, taken on more responsibility, and improved my ability to complete my work accurately and independently.



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July-August 2025

OTM Represents MSU at Conferences

In July and August, OTM team members Austin Check, and John Walters attended the SEC Technology Transfer Officers meeting, a gathering for technology transfer professionals from around the region to share best practices and collaboration opportunities. In addition, as part of the NSF I-Corps Southwest Hub, John and Austin attended the NSF National Innovation Network meeting in Washington, DC.

OTM at MCITy Kicks Off Entrepreneurial Training

In conjunction with the MSU ECenter, entrepreneurial training sessions equip budding startups with the tools to launch their ventures. Over the course of the next 6 months, leading up to the Startup Expedition in January, Tasha led sessions with 30 teams.

September 2025

OTM Engages Industry at Turf Grass Field Day

OTM participated in the annual Turf Grass Field Day, connecting with leaders and stakeholders in the agricultural industry. The event was a key opportunity to showcase MSU's cutting-edge research and intellectual property in turfgrass management and related ag-tech fields. By engaging directly with industry professionals, OTM's Jim Mitchell helped foster relationships aimed at translating university discoveries into real-world applications and licensing opportunities.

Open Knowledge Asset Initiative

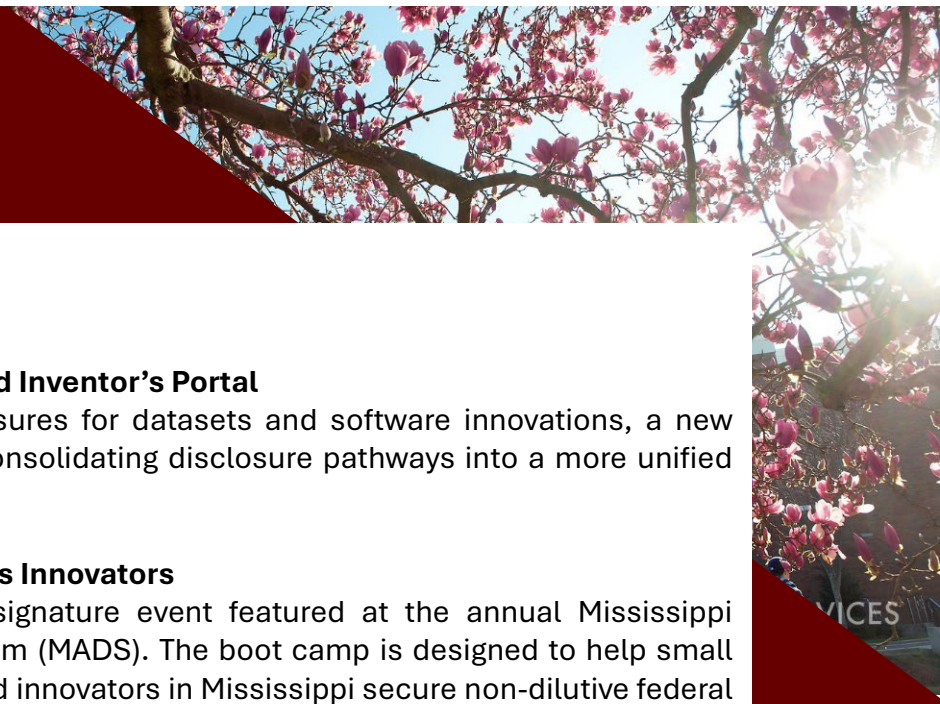
OTM launched the **MSU Open Knowledge Assets Initiative**, bringing together researchers, administrators, librarians, and technology professionals from across the university to address the stewardship of open-source software and research data. The inaugural meeting established campus-wide working groups focused on identifying, protecting, managing, and sustaining these valuable research assets while positioning MSU as a leader in open knowledge, collaboration, and innovation.

SMART Business Act Grant

The Office of Technology Management began accepting preproposals for FY 2026 Strengthening Mississippi Academic Research Through (SMART) Business Act funding. The SMART Business Accelerator Initiative provides proof-of-concept funding to support the development of MSU intellectual property into products and services. Grants of up to $85,000 per project may be used by researchers to validate the commercial viability of innovations through activities such as the development of early product concepts, conducting proof-of-concept studies, and manufacturing prototypes.

OTM Serves as Industry Mentor for the MSU Loci Software I-Corps Team

As part of their NSF Promoting Open-Source Ecosystems (POSE) grant, the Loci team needed an industry mentor to assist during the I-Corps entrepreneurial training program. OTM Assistant Director Austin Check served in this capacity, bringing OTM's access to industry contacts and I-Corps teaching experience to the team. The Loci team successfully completed the program with over 100 customer discovery interviews.



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October 2025

OTM Launches New and Improved Inventor's Portal
To support the creation of disclosures for datasets and software innovations, a new Inventor's Portal was launched, consolidating disclosure pathways into a more unified system.

SBIR/STTR MADS Event Empowers Innovators
The **SBIR/STTR Bootcamp** is a signature event featured at the annual Mississippi Aerospace and Defense Symposium (MADS). The boot camp is designed to help small businesses, STEM researchers, and innovators in Mississippi secure non-dilutive federal funding through the **Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR)** and **Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR)** programs. 15 attendees participated in the event.

Bio on the Bayou
BIO on the BAYOU is a pivotal showcase of underrepresented yet burgeoning biotech and health-related research emerging from universities and small companies in the broader Gulf South. Despite the region's historical challenges with limited resources and restricted industry and investor capital access, BIO on the BAYOU serves as the catalyst for regional change agents to overcome these obstacles and create opportunities. MSU's Dr. Nick Fitzkee presented his work at the conference, sponsored by OTM.

November 2025
Sixth Annual OTM Pig Pickin'
OTM hosted its 6th Annual Pig Pickin', a signature event celebrating the spirit of innovation and community at Mississippi State. Led by Assistant Director Austin Check, the gathering brought together MSU inventors, entrepreneurs, ecosystem partners, and staff for an afternoon of networking and appreciation. This tradition serves to strengthen the bonds within the university's research and startup community, recognizing the hard work and collaborative successes of the past year in a fun, informal setting, with a perfect centerpiece: a whole roast hog, smoked to perfection by the OTM team.

OTM Sponsors Accelerate MS Conference
OTM proudly sponsored the Accelerate MS conference in Jackson, reinforcing its commitment to fostering a vibrant statewide entrepreneurial ecosystem. The conference highlights startups from around the state via the CoBuilders program. Mississippi State hosts two of the qualifying events at the E-Center on campus and MCITy in Vicksburg.

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December 2025

Team Presents on Efficiency at Business Development Conference

OTM shared its expertise on operational excellence at the MSU Staff Development Conference. Andre Kemp presented on workplace efficiencies and process streamlining, demonstrating how the principles used to manage complex technology portfolios can be applied to benefit the broader community. This engagement allowed OTM to provide value and build connections with other campus offices.

January 2026

Startup Expedition Begins at MCITy

Startup Expedition continued to grow at MSU@MCITy, guiding entrepreneurs through a three-phase pipeline from idea exploration to validation, business development, and competition. Through Basecamp, Elevate, and Ascent, participants explored university intellectual property, conducted customer discovery, developed prototypes, and prepared their ventures for the marketplace.

February 2026

OTM Attends CURIOSS Conference in Dublin

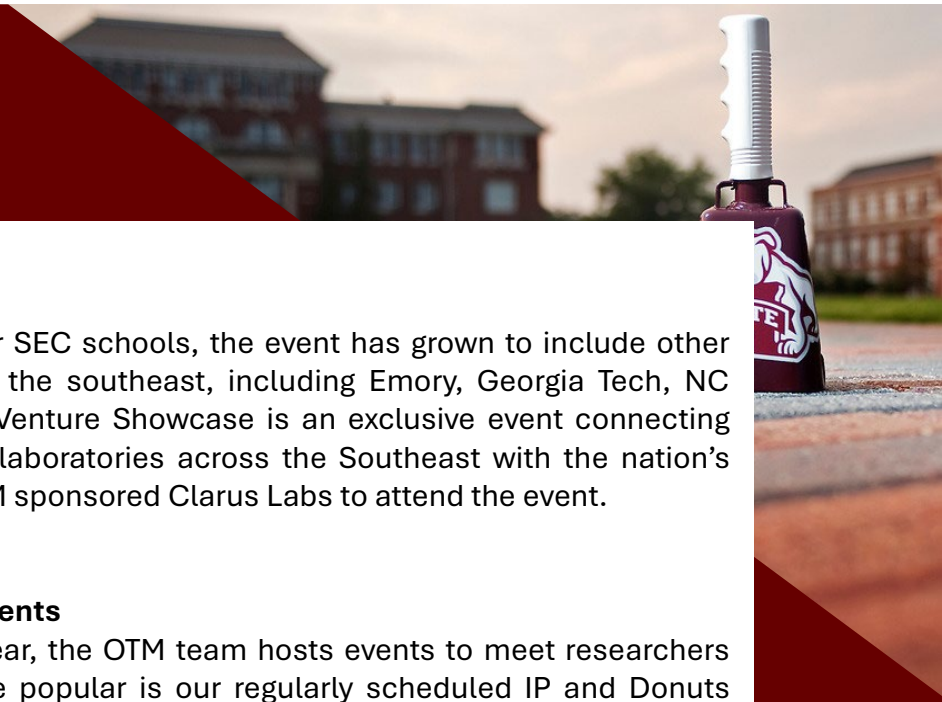
Austin Check represented Mississippi State University's Open-Source Program Office (OSPO) at the Community for University and Research Institution OSPOs (CURIOSS) Conference in Dublin, Ireland, an international gathering focused on advancing open-source innovation, sustainability, and research collaboration. Through engagement with global leaders in open-source software, Austin explored emerging best practices for community building, governance, and ecosystem development, bringing valuable insights back to strengthen MSU's growing open- source initiatives and research impact.

OTM Attends AUTM National Conference

The OTM team attended the Association of University Technology Managers (AUTM) National Meeting, the largest gathering of technology transfer professionals in the world. This flagship event provided an invaluable opportunity to connect with industry partners and investors. The conference allowed the team to increase its knowledge of industry best practices while networking with peers from top research universities to build strategic relationships that advance the university's commercialization mission.

March 2026

DAWG Tank 2026, this OTM/ECenter annual pitch event featured 20 teams across Innovation, Main Street, and High School divisions and awarded $18,800 in prize funding. A particular highlight was the inaugural Entrepreneur Bootcamp for students from all three Vicksburg high schools. The Innovation winner qualified for the InnovateMS CoBuilders program.



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April 2025
Southeast Venture Showcase
Started as a venture showcase for SEC schools, the event has grown to include other leading research organizations in the southeast, including Emory, Georgia Tech, NC State and others. The Southeast Venture Showcase is an exclusive event connecting research universities and federal laboratories across the Southeast with the nation's venture community. This year, OTM sponsored Clarus Labs to attend the event.

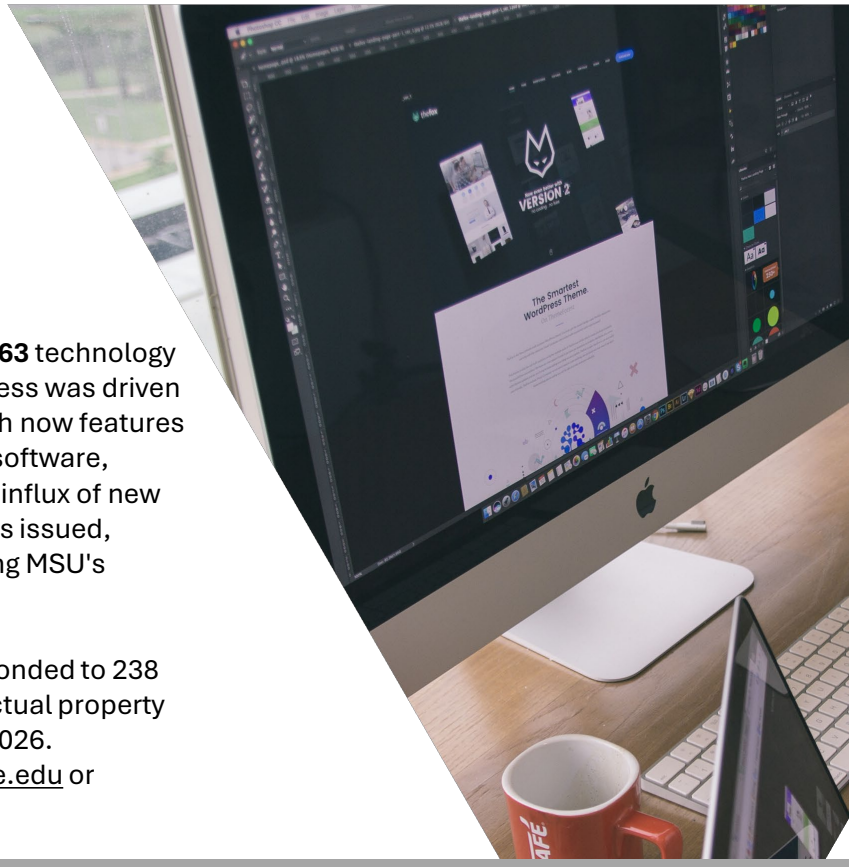
May 2026
Continuing Outreach to Departments
Not only in May, but across the year, the OTM team hosts events to meet researchers where they are. One of the more popular is our regularly scheduled IP and Donuts session, where our Licensing Associates get of the Research Park to share information about tech transfer and learn about the research initiatives in the departments.

June 2026
Spreading the Good News of Tech Transfer
OTM has expanded its outreach with a strong social media presence, showcasing MSU's innovation. Weekly Tech Tuesday, Tech Tip Thursday, Featured Friday, and Patent Spotlights highlight MSU researchers and discoveries, connecting the research community with partners. Led by Andre Kemp and Ashlynn Ledford, OTM surpassed **1,400** followers, reflecting growing interest in MSU's research impact.

MSU's Award Winning Researcher – Dr. Colleen Scott
In June 2026, John accompanied Dr. Colleen Scott to Washington, D.C., where she received the prestigious American Innovator Award from the Bayh-Dole Coalition for her groundbreaking work in cancer imaging technologies. During the two-day event, representatives from MSU joined Dr. Scott in meetings with Mississippi's congressional delegation and other federal policymakers to showcase the impact of university innovation and advocate for continued support of federally funded research and technology commercialization.

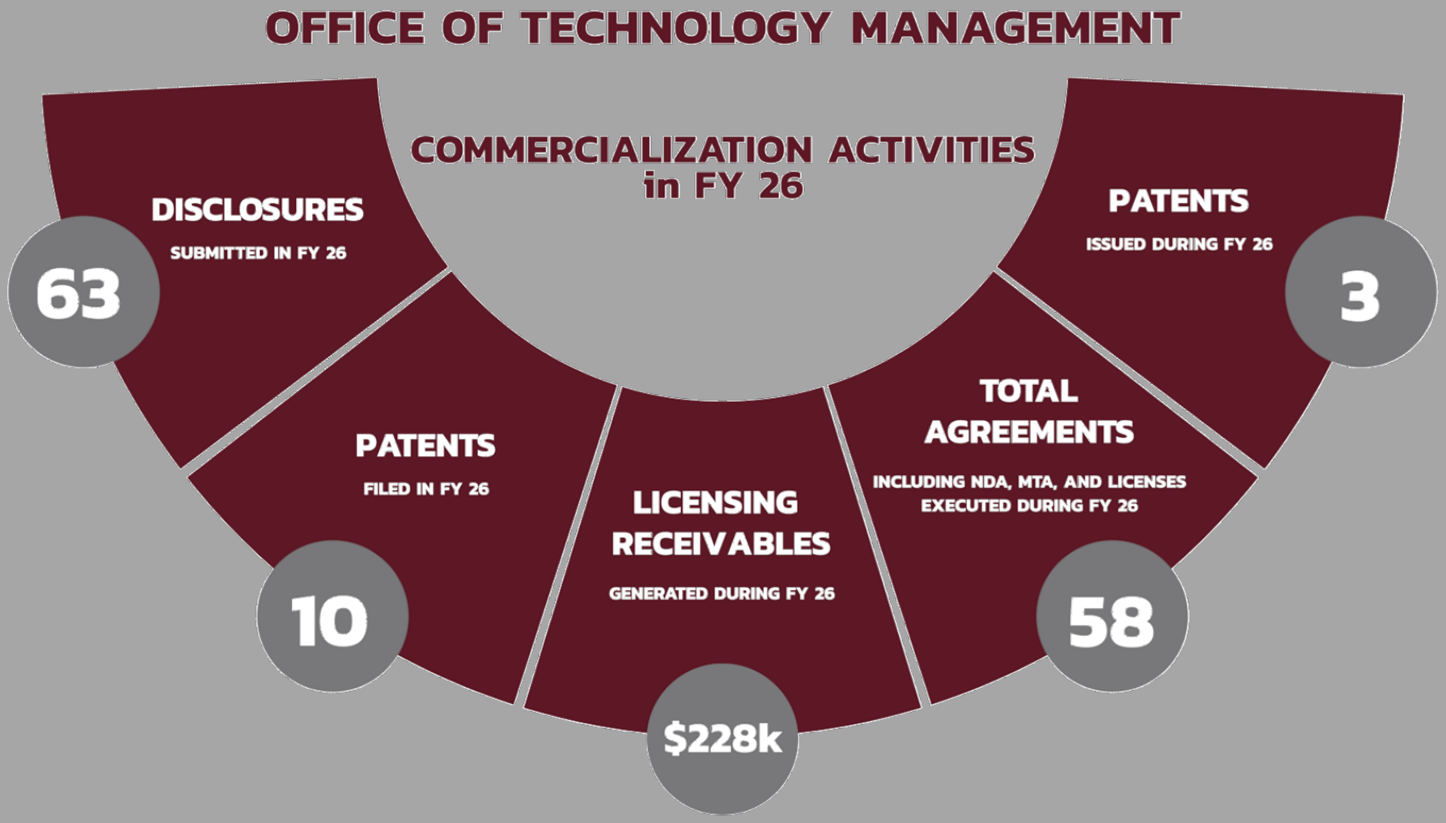
last year's

NUMBERS & STATISTICS



In a landmark year for innovation, OTM processed a record **63** technology disclosures, the highest number in office history. This success was driven in part by a significant revamp of the Inventor's Portal, which now features distinct and streamlined submission forms for inventions, software, copyright works, and datasets. Complementing this record influx of new ideas, the office also filed 10 new patents and saw 3 patents issued, reflecting continued momentum in protecting and advancing MSU's intellectual property.

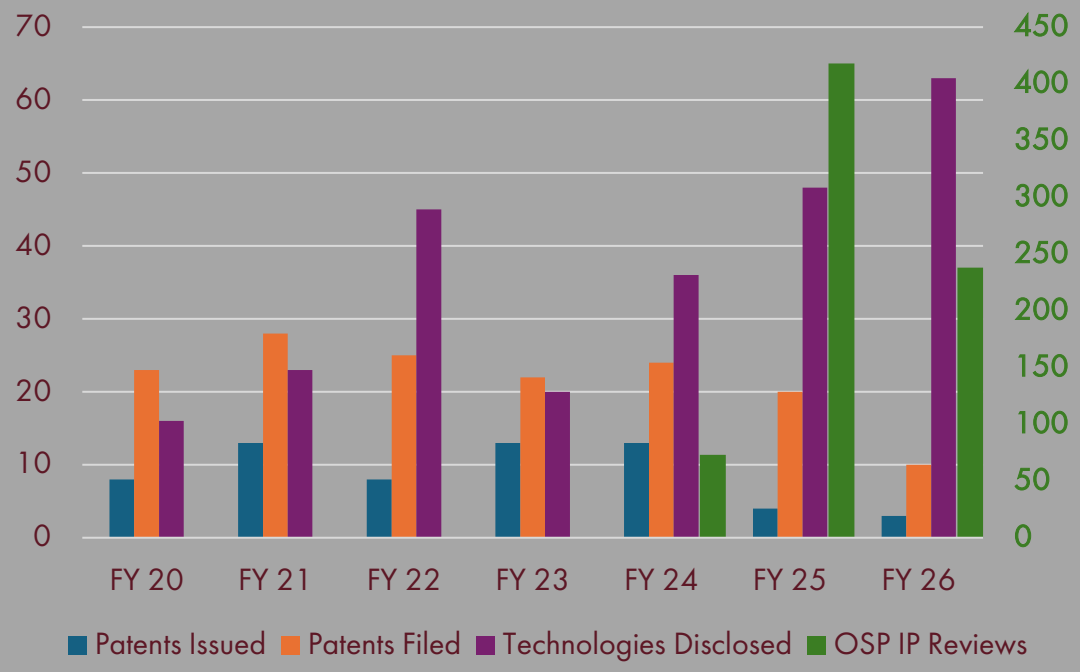
In addition, as a partner in research support our office responded to 238 Cayuse tickets and 366 closeout requests to review intellectual property matters from the Office of Sponsored Programs during FY 2026.
Please do not hesitate to contact us at office@otm.msstate.edu or (662) 325-9263 with any questions.



NUMBERS & STATISTICS

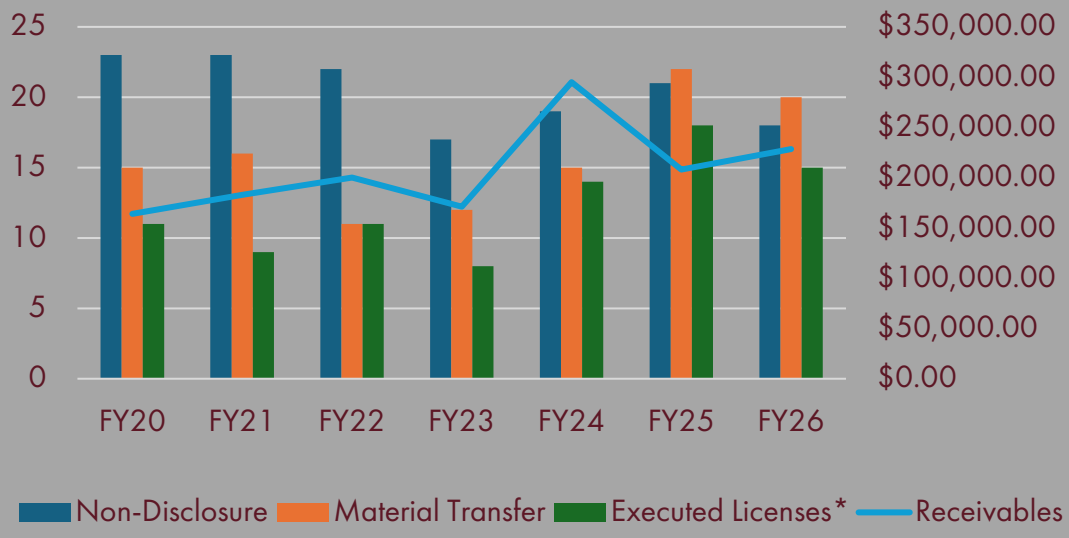
Intellectual Property Numbers

Over the last 7 fiscal years



Agreements & Receivables

Over the last 7 fiscal years



** Including Amended & Restated, Research, Exclusive, Non-exclusive, Sublicense, Research Option, Option - RTA – Nonexclusive Licenses executed during the fiscal year*