

PART FOUR

Conclusions

To conclude this report, the Committee offers the following suggestions for the redesign of a Matching Grants Program.

Recognize that research in the social sciences and humanities is different from research in the natural sciences and engineering, which in turn is different from medical sciences research. A sophisticated understanding of these significant differences is essential in designing a program of university-industry collaboration. The kinds of industry that support each of these three divisions of research are considerably different from one another and have considerably different access to financial resources to support research.

Recognize that if the objective of the program is to encourage university-industry collaboration, including university endowment funds as part of the private sector does not meet that objective. The inclusion of this category seems to be there simply to allow social sciences and humanities to get the maximum federal matching of private sector contributions.

Recognize that if the objective is to encourage an increase in support from the private sector, then there has to be some encouragement to the researchers and universities to solicit this support, and there has to be an incentive for the private sector to increase their contributions from their current level of support. This means providing overhead funding so that universities can develop such a program.

Recognize that before it renews this program, the government must undertake a thorough broad-based evaluation of its operation to date. While the government is already committed to undertaking a review, we wish to stress that such a review must not be so narrow as to focus exclusively on whether the program has met its objectives. It must include a review of other factors that go into any broad-based measurement of effectiveness. This includes such elements as the appropriateness of the program, its relevance to the stated needs, its acceptance by the community it is intended to serve, its secondary and unintended effects, and the cost of its delivery.

The review must include an examination of the original purpose of the program and an evaluation as to whether the achievements of this program are still appropriate. This also means consideration of whether there are better ways of achieving the stated objectives such as alternative programs like the new Network of Centres of Excellence program or special strategic grants through the research granting councils.

Lastly, if the government is to undertake this broad-based review in 1989-90, it should begin now by paying special attention to the design of the evaluation and by submitting it to the program clients to ensure that the evaluators will be looking at the right things. For example, it may be that a special evaluation committee should be set up to advise the Minister or Deputy Minister on what is an appropriate set of elements that should go into this evaluation. We look forward to seeing the results of this evaluation and serve notice that we may call on the department at the beginning of the next fiscal year to explain how the department will undertake this evaluation.