

HP Announces New Strategy For University Reseach

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Hewlett-Packard announced a new strategy Wednesday for partnering with university researchers around the world, as part of the company's effort to leverage its own research by focusing on a short list of priorities.

The Palo Alto tech giant is inviting universities to submit proposals for grants to fund research in five areas, which the company identified earlier this year as the primary focus for its HP Labs division.

HP spends about \$3.6 billion a year on R&D. Most of that goes to product development, with about \$150 million going into pure research at HP Labs. HP executive Rich Friedrich said the budget for academic partnerships isn't changing, but he wants to spend the money more strategically and also consider more proposals from overseas.

In the past, he said, a majority of HP's academic partnerships have been in the United States.

The company is offering academic grants of \$50,000 to \$75,000 a year, which could be renewed for up to three years. Friedrich, the director of HP's Open Innovation Office, said he ultimately hopes to award four or five grants for each of 23 work units at HP Labs.

The money is intended to cover expenses of a faculty member and a student assistant, who would also be eligible for an internship at HP. Proposals for the next school year are due June 18.

Earlier this year, HP Labs announced a restructuring aimed at focusing on 20 to 30 major projects, rather than 150 smaller efforts.

Those projects are organized under five categories: information analysis, cloud-based computing, transferring content between formats and devices, creating "intelligent infrastructure" and reducing environmental impacts.

Many Silicon Valley companies sponsor academic research, through arrangements that can vary even within a firm. Friedrich said his company is trying a more systematic approach, with a standardized process for soliciting and evaluating proposals.

In addition, HP sought universities' input in developing a standard agreement for sharing the rights to any new discoveries, while giving the company license to develop products based on the results.

Local university officials praised the effort. One predicted that other firms will adopt similar strategies, as they try to allocate R&D funds more efficiently.

"Companies are trying to be a little more coherent and focused in what they do," said Michael Isaacson, acting dean of the Baskin School of Engineering at the University of California-Santa Cruz. "Before, it was more ad hoc or one-on-one. You might meet someone at a conference and do a project."