

An aerial photograph of the Texas A&M University campus, showing various buildings, green spaces, and a central dome. The text is overlaid on the image.

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at Texas A&M University

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My career has lived at the intersection of research, entrepreneurship, and capital






- **Scientist** at a land-grant university
- **Entrepreneur**, built an agtech startup
- **Innovation / Commercialization leader**
- Built/scaled enterprise growth platforms (Syngenta + FMC)
- >\$75M capital deployed + \$250M+ follow-on + 7 exits
- Startup boards + coaching/mentoring entrepreneurs
- Operated in North America, Latam, Europe, India, China, Africa

What I've Learned

- New markets are often created by **entrepreneurs** at the **edges** of established systems
- Risk capital (like VC) matters, but **conversion systems** matter more
- **R1 universities**, especially land-grants, are uniquely positioned to activate talent, translate research, and create public value

TAMU is already elite in research scale.

Opportunity is broader participation, stronger academic integration, better faculty translation, and higher venture yield

					
Research Expenditures	\$1.4 Billion	\$1.4 Billion	\$1.04 Billion	\$1.01 Billion	\$1.5 Billion
Participation & Academic Reach	<4% student participation	Faculty ambassadors + spaces + seed fund	Foundry as front door	START + STAIR + DRIVE + EIR support	CREATE-X 38 majors represented
Translation & Venture Yield	271 disclosures; 67 license/ options; 9 startups (FY25)	300 disclosures; 112 licenses; 48 startups over last 3 academic years	479 disclosures; 161 licenses/ options; 18 startups (FY25)	140 invention records; 30 startups accelerated	355 disclosures; 20 startups licensed (FY24)
Ecosystem Pull-through	McFerrin + TAMU Innovation + ADM grants + RELLIS/BCDC proving grounds	\$10M UT Seed Fund + faculty ambassadors + Innovation Tower/Labs	Integrated OTC + incubator + ventures under Purdue Innovates	START + STAIR + DRIVE + MentorNet/EIR + Angels on Campus	CREATE-X pathway + workshops + launch program

If you're an entrepreneur,
you're in SALES.

MINOR IN
TECHNICAL SALES



ATM Industrial Distribution
COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

tx.ag/TechnicalSales



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Engineering

ENGINEERING ENTREPRENEURSHIP HOUR

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and entrepreneurial skills through this
1-credit hour seminar course!

** A pre-req for all entrepreneurship courses*

- Engage with industry leaders
- Network with success

Fits seamlessly into your schedule



MTDE 252/652

TUESDAYS
3:55-4:55 p.m.



tx.ag/MeloySeminar

Texas A&M is at an entrepreneurship inflection point

1

Research Scale

- \$1.4B R&D
- No. 1 research university in Texas

2

Structural Shift

- McFerrin elevated
- Integration, academic expansion, co-curricular opps, hub infrastructure

3

Participation Gap

- 4% student engagement in entrepreneurship

4

Conversion Opportunity

- More entrepreneurs
- More teams moving from interest to action

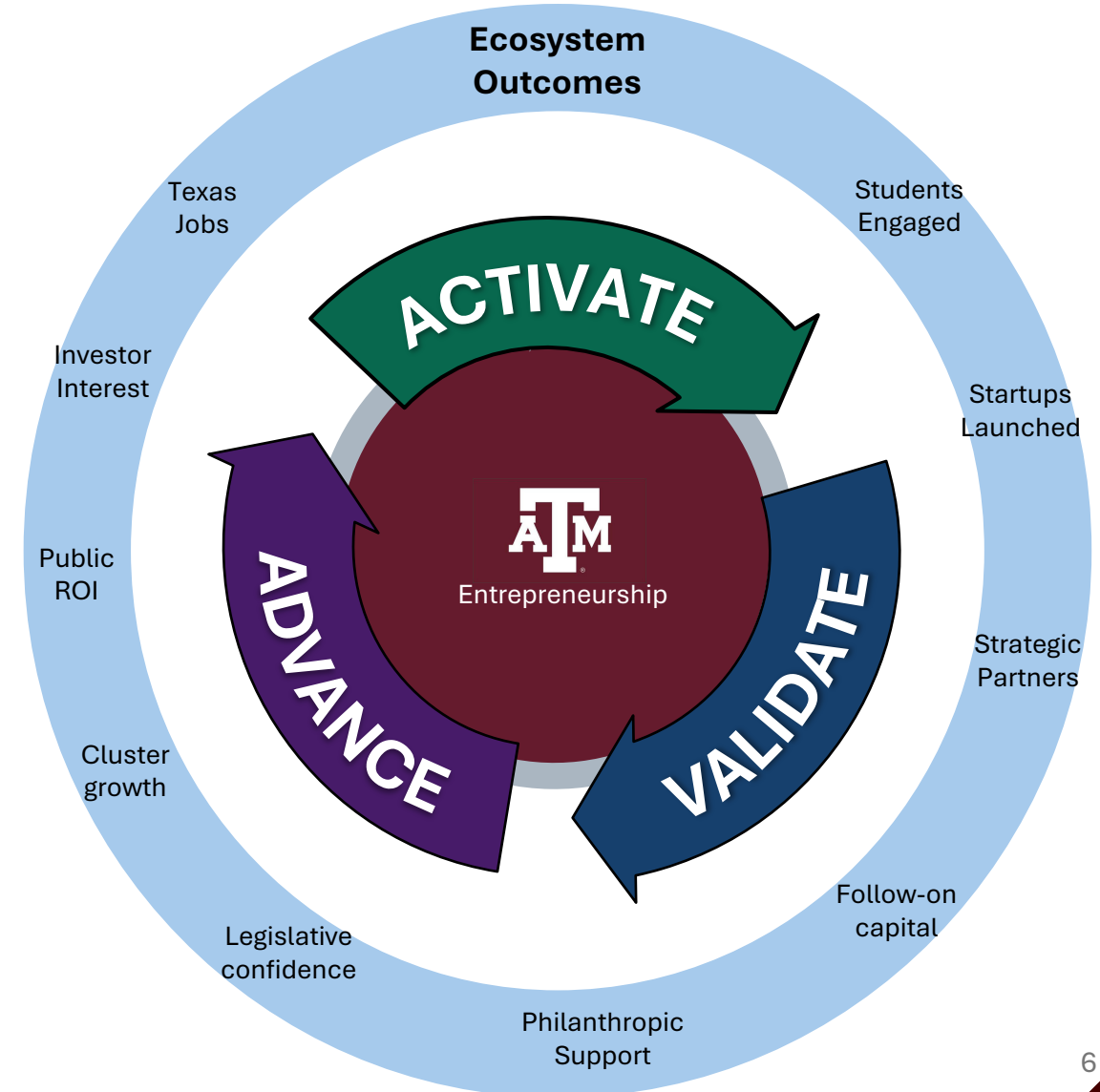
How I see the role:

- Architect and integrator of a university-wide entrepreneurship system.
- Collaborative, cross-college, built through alignment.
- Move Texas A&M from a collection of strong entrepreneurship assets to a university-wide venture translation system.






A university-wide entrepreneurship system

Provost priorities: **Integration** | **Academic expansion** | **Co-curricular opportunity** | **Hub facilities**

Activate people	McFerrin + colleges + student/faculty pathways <ul style="list-style-type: none">- broaden participation- surface ideas and teams- curricular and co-curricular pathways
Validate opportunities	TAMU Innovation + faculty + external partners + RELLIS as needed <ul style="list-style-type: none">- technical and market derisking- proofs of concept, pilots- commercialization shaping
Advance impact	Capital + adopters + alumni network + public ROI <ul style="list-style-type: none">- ventures and licenses- capital, partner pull-through- Texas-facing impact








Market shaping opportunities sit at the seams

	Food, Ag & Biosecurity <i>TAMU edge: AgriLife + engineering + field deployment</i>	Health Engineering & Diagnostics <i>TAMU edge: Engineering + HSC + translational pathways</i>	Autonomy, Robotics & Dual-Use Systems <i>TAMU edge: Engineering + RELLIS + BCDC</i>	Energy, Resilience & Infrastructure <i>TAMU edge: Engineering + RELLIS + applied energy systems</i>
 A.I., Data & Compute				
 Novel Biology & Biomanufacturing				
 Automation, Robotics & Sensing				
 Process, Manufacturing & Scale-up				
 Validation, Testbeds & Field Deployment				

Institutional strengths collide here:




AgriLife × Engineering ... Engineering × HSC ... AgriLife × HSC × Engineering

	Food, Ag & Biosecurity <i>TAMU edge: AgriLife + engineering + field deployment</i>	Health Engineering & Diagnostics <i>TAMU edge: Engineering + HSC + translational pathways</i>	Autonomy, Robotics & Dual-Use Systems <i>TAMU edge: Engineering + RELIS + BCDC</i>	Energy, Resilience & Infrastructure <i>TAMU edge: Engineering + RELIS + applied energy systems</i>
 A.I., Data & Compute				
 Novel Biology & Biomanufacturing				
 Automation, Robotics & Sensing	Precision ag, biologics, resilient supply chains	Devices, diagnostics, bio-manufacturing	Unmanned systems, wildfire response, defense-adjacent autonomy	Microreactors, grid resilience, industrial systems
 Process, Manufacturing & Scale-up				
 Validation, Testbeds & Field Deployment				

McFerrin as the university-wide activation engine



Its elevation under the Provost creates the platform to broaden participation, surface ideas earlier, and create stronger cross-college pathways.

Expand Access 	Spark Collisions 	Readiness Support 
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- One front door – single intake for students, faculty, researchers- College-embedded connectors –surface people and ideas sooner (e.g., Faculty Entrepreneurship Fellows)- Visibility – low barrier formats like workshops, problem sessions, curriculum integration, events	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Interdisciplinary curricula – make cross-listed courses easier to create across colleges- Thesis-led challenges – specific to interdisciplinary themes- Cross-college team formations – matchmaking for students, faculty- Research-to-venture sprints – short cohort programs to test use cases and prepare for next-step handoff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- EIRs and mentors – curated bench of experts to help teams, matched to thesis area- Stage-gated readiness – customer discovery, pitch feedback, next step support- Handoff protocols – routing paths for TAMU Innovation, RELLIS, external partners

Not every student should start a company.

But more should experience entrepreneurship as a way to apply knowledge, solve problems, and create value.

Entrepreneurial qualities worth building

Problem-obsessed



Good narrative



Grit



Strong bias towards action



Coachable



Progress over perfection





Validating entrepreneurial output

Texas A&M Innovation

Commercialization shaping, IP paths, poc routing

Faculty + partners

Technical, market, user validation

RELLIS / BCDC

pilots and proving grounds for selected hard-tech opportunities

Validate

Technical proof, user feedback

Demonstrate




Pilots, evidence, field deployment

De-risk

Shorten path to credible application

Advancing strong opportunities

Help validated opportunities move into the right downstream path, attract outside support, and generate value.

Route 	Mobilize 	Anchor in Texas 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Startups, licenses, and other commercialization pathways - Match opportunities to startup, license, sponsored partnership, or other best-fit route. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Donor, angel, seed, strategic, and venture capital pathways - Investor facing readiness - Stronger connections to outside partners, customers, and investors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stronger links to Houston, Fort Worth, and regional ecosystems - Retain more companies, talent, and follow-on activity in Texas

How this federated system would be governed

Entrepreneurship and Innovation Council

- Deans' designees, McFerrin, Texas A&M Innovation / research-commercialization, student voice, Provost representation
- Sets shared priorities, intake/routing norms, metrics, and cross-college pilots

External Advisory Council

- Alumni founders, investors, corporate innovation leaders, ecosystem partners
- Supports mentorship, EIRs, partner pathways, and market feedback

Student Advisory Board

- Identifies where the system is confusing, slow, or hard to access
- Improves front-door design, participation, and programming

Faculty Entrepreneurship Fellows

- College-embedded connectors for opportunities, mentoring, and curricular pilots
- Help translate university priorities into college-level action

KPIs

Leading indicators

- % of students engaged across colleges
- % of cross-college teams entering pathways
- % of projects routed into translation support
- % of faculty / mentors / partners engaged

Outcome indicators

- # startups launched
- # licenses / options / pilots executed
- \$ outside capital attracted
- \$ partner dollars / sponsored pilots
- Texas-facing outcomes: jobs, deployments, retained companies, state problem-solving

What Success Means for...

Students:

- broader participation
- stronger founder pipeline
- entrepreneurial mindset across disciplines

Faculty / researchers:

- strengthened commercialization pathways
- faster movement from discovery to market validation
- more support for interdisciplinary venture formations

University:

- more visible venture formation and translational outcomes
- stronger partner engagement
- better conversion of research scale into impact
- external funding secured: philanthropic and industry

Texas / Region / Nation:

- Creation of more entrepreneurial leaders, jobs, startups, partnerships, problem-solving, and capital attracted into Texas

Roadmap for the first 24 months

Standing Priorities

One front door	Themed venture pathways	Translation stack	Partner and Alumni flywheel
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First 6 months
Listen, Map, Align

Months 6-12
Build Momentum

Months 12-24
Scale What Works

- Listen deeply, map existing paths
- Align resources and decision points
- Define thesis areas
- Pilot thematic advisory groups in priority areas
- Support entrepreneurship minor and curricular pilots

- Launch “one front door” concept
- Pilot 2-3 thesis led challenges
- EIRs and Faculty Fellows deployed

- Double down on what works
- Expand validation and pilots
- Strengthen downstream handoffs
- Evaluate whether new seed mechanisms are warranted based on observed bottlenecks

Appendix

What gets more students engaged?

- Embed entrepreneurship exposure into more majors, not just business and engineering
- Launch/scale low-barrier thesis-based challenges and venture discovery workshops
- Build cross-college team formation catalysts and support
- Create clearer visible entry points and progression pathways

What gets more faculty engaged?

- Faculty Entrepreneurship Fellows embedded in colleges
- Faculty-oriented venture discovery / commercialization sprints
- Earlier access to mentors, EIRs, and thematic advisory groups
- Cleaner handoffs to TAMU Innovation and pilot opportunities



- **Activation:** 30+ programs; thousands engaged
- **Education:** Ideas Challenge, Weekend Startup, Startup 101 / workshops
- **Mentoring:** Mentor Network of alumni, entrepreneurs, and business professionals
- **Ecosystem:** Student Marketplace, Aggie 100, Advisory Council

Additional Ideas

- **Proactive Venture Studios (UT Austin Model).** Instead of waiting for faculty disclosures, TAMU could launch venture studios that identify real-world needs first and then align university researchers and commercialization resources to build companies. This "structured approach" is particularly effective in complex sectors like medical digital twins or autonomous systems.
- **Purdue utilizes the "Trask Fund"** to provide stage-specific grants for pitch challenges and prototyping. TAMU should expand its internal grant mechanisms to specifically fund "translational" work that bridges the gap between basic research and a Series A investment.
- **Founder-Incentivized Tenure (UC Davis Model).** Align faculty promotions with "Impact Metrics." If faculty members see that startup creation is rewarded alongside citations, the volume of invention disclosures (currently ~248-335 for peers like UC Davis) will increase.
- **Corporate-Venture-in-Residence.** Utilize the RELLIS STEM center to host "CVC Scouts" from companies like Boeing or Chevron. By embedding these scouts within the labs, TAMU can ensure that research is commercially "aligned" from day one