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### Weekly Columns

[Articles](#)  
[Business Briefs](#)  
[Business Profile](#)  
[Your Money](#)  
[Real Estate](#)  
[Inside Media](#)  
[Calendar](#)

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[Best Practices \(1st Week\)](#)  
[PR Nerd \(2nd Week\)](#)  
[Small Business \(2nd Week\)](#)  
[Tech Talk \(3rd Week\)](#)  
[Business Travel \(4th Week\)](#)  
[Business Essentials \(4th Week\)](#)

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[Daily Stories](#)  
[Bankruptcies](#)  
[Bid Notices](#)  
[Civil Cases](#)  
[Civil Judgements](#)  
[Divorce Decrees](#)  
[Divorce Petitions](#)  
[Liens/Releases](#)  
[Marriage Licenses](#)  
[New Corporations](#)  
[Probate Cases](#)  
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## Manchester, Ottawa talks get more animated

*By Philip S. Moore, Inside Tucson Business*  
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"We're going to work now," said John Grabo, director of marketing and international programs for the University of Arizona's Office of Economic Development.

After months of talks between officials in Manchester, U.K., and Tucson, the two cities unveiled a step-by-step plan for cooperative marketing and development, which will be implemented over the next 18 months.

Focusing on key industry sectors, as well as small and medium-sized firms ready to proceed with joint trade and investment efforts, "we've now gotten to the point where we've put the tactics in place and will begin to execute."

The announcement was the culmination of a week-long series of visits by representatives from Carleton University in Ottawa, the Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation, Manchester Investment & Development Agency Service, Manchester Science and Technology Park, and the City of Manchester, all aimed at improving academic exchange and trade between the University of Arizona and Tucson and its international partners in the university's Global Advantage Network.

"We're really beginning to see momentum on the execution side," Grabo said.

The week that ended with the Manchester agreement started with the visit from the Canadian delegation, including Carleton University President David Atkinson. They were involved in joint faculty meetings and planning sessions to expand cooperative research and development opportunities.

"This was the third visit for Carleton University in an ongoing series to build collaboration," Grabo said. Speaking at a Feb. 27 reception for the Canadians at the Arizona Inn, he said the Ottawa-Tucson collaboration is about encouraging "bilateral success" by building stronger relationships.

"We've got quite a bit going on, five years into this process. The next step is to broaden our relationship with Canada by networking with other cities and working together to extend into other marketplaces."

Commenting on the possibilities for the immediate future, Rick Stephenson, Tucson-based consul and trade commissioner for Canada, said the visit to Southern Arizona by Canadian Prime Minister's national science advisor, Arthur Carty, opened new doors. "He has said since that he was very impressed by Tucson, especially how far the partnership has evolved in the

Mar 4, 2006

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last 5-6 years. This is a really good example of something that is working. We're getting researchers together and finding funding to move projects further along the road toward commercialization."

What Ottawa and Tucson still need to do is move beyond optics and photonics to develop joint research and development relationships in new areas, such as water and information system management, Stephenson said. "We need to expand the partnership."

Atkinson, who noted that he was only able to spend a day in Tucson, said, "This is a remarkable opportunity. The idea that we can cement a relationship between two universities and two nations, I can't think of anything better than that."

Vice President of Research at Carleton, Feridun Hamdullahpur, said the meetings with the University of Arizona already make this relationship exceptional. "We have 377 of these (research) agreements with universities, and this isn't one of them. This agreement has content and meaning, and areas of common interest, but more importantly, we've found a lot of friendship and warmth and believe we'll be able to grow this relationship further."

Leslie Tolbert, University of Arizona's vice president for research, also sees possibilities for collaboration, but not just in the sciences. Humanities, the arts and social sciences also offer "many areas of potential synergy." She said, "Every day brings exciting new directions to go as we blaze the trail to really substantive international collaboration."

While the researchers agreed that there was potential for generating research dollars from two nations, they cautioned that the route to genuine commercialization is uncertain. Banu Ormeci, a Carleton University faculty member specializing in wastewater treatment and use of bio-solids, said that collaboration is a fundamental part of academic research, whatever the outcome. "Establishing cooperative research means more opportunities for research funding."

Gabriel Wainer, another Carleton researcher, said there's an emphasis on technology transfer and commercialization, "but I'm still waiting for a graduate student who'll want to take things forward. I'm still happy with academia."

When any of the researchers are ready to go forward, Jim Fountain, director of the Arizona Center for Innovation, said he's ready to help. The center, on the campus of the University of Arizona Science and Technology Park, is designed to smooth the way for those trying to move from the laboratory to the marketplace. "We focus on early stage high technology business, providing a lot of mentoring and support, especially for those without a lot of experience in this process."

He said, "I'm not sure how quickly this will happen when it comes to these collaborations, but academics will always be finding people at other universities with whom they have something in common. Once they start talking, it's inevitable that some will want to take it to the next level," he said.

"That's the point where we'll get involved. So, we're ready when they are."

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