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Abstract

In the study of innovation institutions, it is important to consider how different institutional models can affect a research organization in conducting or funding successful work. As an industry collaborative, Semiconductor Research Corporation (SRC) provides an example of a privately funded institution that leverages the inputs of several member companies, along with federal funding, to accomplish innovation in its mission area. SRC has several component programs, all attempting to find innovative solutions to semiconductor problems, but on different time scales, and in different technology areas. But how does SRC use its resources to ensure these goals? Through data gathered from semi-structured qualitative interviews and SRC documentation, this paper addresses that question. SRC has found a way to leverage industry money to motivate and develop a robust field of university research for over 30 years. SRC uses several mechanisms for maintaining an application focused, member-centered decision process, institutional flexibility, and strong ties between industry contributors and university researchers. SRC has continued to keep its members satisfied by training

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thousands of graduate students for employment in their member companies, by focusing on precompetitive research that addresses industry requirements, and doing so in a manner that operates leanly, with low overhead to its funders. Given these successes, we identify aspects of SRC operations, such as a focus on its member company needs, frequent interactions between funders and researchers, flexible funding mechanisms, and focus on workforce development, that may be diffusible to innovation institutions, including federal research efforts. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)