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University, Industry, and Government Alliances: Escalating Conflicts with the Public Interest

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This paper addresses threats to the public interest in a period where economic globalization has promoted increasing university, industry, and government collaborations. A significant focus of these partnerships has been industry-supported research that purports to serve the public interest but instead creates conflicts of interest for both universities and government. The implications are drawn especially for academic researchers with entrepreneurial pursuits. In addition, specific examples are given of how existing regulatory mechanisms have been inadequate with respect to preventing the intrusion of corporate profit-making over the public welfare. In the context of national and state budgetary shortfalls, it will become that much more attractive for institutions to seek commercial support to realize public interest goals. For this reason, the impact of commercially funded activities deserves much more public policy attention.

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