

FAQs for Students

1) What is Columbia Technology Ventures (Tech Ventures)?

[Columbia Technology Ventures](#) is the technology transfer office of Columbia University, charged with managing Columbia University's intellectual property. With more than 350 invention disclosures received, 70+ license deals executed, and 15+ start-up companies launched each year on average, Columbia Technology Ventures has ranked among the top five leading university technology transfer offices each year for the past decade. We also host ~20 lectures & panel discussions each year on topics related to entrepreneurship and intellectual property, which all students are welcome to attend.

2) I have an idea for a start-up company that I've been kicking-around. Can Columbia help me?

Yes. Whether you have specific questions, would like to brainstorm about a potential business idea, or want to learn more about what it takes to launch a new venture, there are a variety of resources available at Columbia to help you get started. Please see <http://entrepreneurship.columbia.edu> for more information.

3) I think I might have a new patentable invention. How can Tech Ventures help me?

When it comes to realizing the commercial potential of a new patentable invention, our seasoned team of business and legal professionals can help evaluate the commercial potential of your idea and advise you on important steps to protect, market, license, and/or otherwise position your idea for commercialization. Contact us at techventures@columbia.edu to set up an appointment with one of our team of licensing officers.

4) Does Columbia have an ownership claim to my invention?

While Columbia may in some instances have an ownership interest in your invention per [Columbia policy](#), Tech Ventures will generally assign whatever Columbia's rights and interests in the invention may be to you if all of the following are true:

- All Columbia-affiliated inventors are students;
- None of the Columbia-affiliated inventors is employed by the university in a research setting (e.g., research-related work study, part-time, casual, or temp roles; or research assistant, teaching assistant, fellow, or post-doc positions; or in any other research capacity); and
- The activity from which the invention arose did not make significant use of funding provided by or to the university (e.g., federal grants or industry funding for research), university research materials (e.g., laboratories or technical equipment), or university employee time (e.g., Faculty, technical staff).

Please note that, in keeping with many of our peer universities' practices, Tech Ventures generally does not consider the following to constitute "significant use":

- Advice that a student may receive from a faculty or staff member as may be commonly solicited in the context of an educational experience (i.e., related to a course);
- Use of Columbia resources by students in the context of their coursework (e.g., classrooms, dorms, and email);
- Very small stipends made by departments in an educational context, such as to provide student teams with a budget for components during senior design classes.

5) Can telling others about my invention jeopardize my ability to file a patent application?

Unfortunately, yes. In the U.S., you may have up to one year from the date of your first public disclosure of the invention to file a patent application. This one-year period is commonly called “the grace period.” However, outside the US, you generally have no grace period – you must file your application before any non-confidential disclosure of the invention.

Determining whether a disclosure is public (US) or non-confidential (ex-US) can be challenging. But, some general guidance can be given to help avoid inadvertently triggering a filing deadline.

- Conferences and publications (both on-line and in print) are usually public.
- Discussions among Columbia students and Columbia instructors in a class, and discussions between a Columbia student and a Columbia faculty advisor, are usually considered confidential.
- Discussions with non-Columbia personnel (e.g., outside mentors) are usually non-confidential unless there is a non-disclosure agreement in place, though these discussions may still be considered non-public from the USPTO’s perspective.

There is no bright line to determine public and non-confidential disclosures. We invite you to contact us if you would like more information on this topic.

6) I’d like to learn more, where can I get more information?

For more information about Tech Ventures, who we are and what we do, please visit our website at www.techventures.columbia.edu or email us at techventures@columbia.edu. We also invite you to [join our mailing list](#) to receive the latest news and events on topics relating to technology transfer, entrepreneurship, and innovation at Columbia.