

Shaping technology transfer and policy-oriented entrepreneurship research: Albert N. Link and Donald S. Siegel recipients of the 2026 Global Award for Entrepreneurship Research

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Abstract Professors Albert N. Link and Donald S. Siegel are the joint recipients of the 2026 Global Award for Entrepreneurship Research. Over several decades, their scholarship has fundamentally reshaped our understanding of how technology transfer, public policy, and institutional design influence entrepreneurial activity. Drawing on rigorous economic theory and quantitative methods, often combined with insights from management and public administration, they have established technology transfer as a core domain within entrepreneurship research. Their work demonstrates how universities, public research organizations, and government programs—most notably those shaped by the Bayh–Dole Act and the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program—affect entrepreneurial entry, innovation, and growth. By shifting attention beyond the individual entrepreneur and firm to the surrounding institutional and policy environment, Link and Siegel broadened the analytical scope of the field and provided a foundation for evidence-based entrepreneurship policy. In parallel, their leadership in building scholarly communities, journals, and research networks has been instrumental in consolidating technology transfer and public-sector entrepreneurship as vibrant research areas. Collectively, their contributions have advanced theory, informed policy design, and influenced practice, thereby leaving a lasting imprint on entrepreneurship research and its societal relevance.

Plain English Summary Professors Albert N. Link and Donald S. Siegel are the joint recipients of the 2026 Global Award for Entrepreneurship Research. They are awarded the prize for their research on innovative entrepreneurship, and how new firm formation and growth depend upon and draw strength from local flows of knowledge and technology. In their research, they have particularly explained how universities, public research organizations, and government programs can contribute to innovative entrepreneurship, and in important ways promoted the development of government policies aimed at enhanced entrepreneurial activity. Their research has opened up new perspectives and scholarly conversations in the field of entrepreneurship research, centered around the societal embeddedness and relevance of entrepreneurship.

JEL Classification L26; O31; O38; H25; I23

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1 Introduction

The winners of the Global Award for Entrepreneurship Research 2026 are Professors Albert N. Link and Donald S. Siegel. Their key research contributions to the scholarly field of entrepreneurship have centered on four topics: technology transfer, the entrepreneurial university, entrepreneurship in the public sector, and policy to promote innovative entrepreneurship. Prior to their research, little was known about the roles of key institutions and organizations, including policy, in promoting entrepreneurship. Link and Siegel have produced pioneering research explicitly identifying the key contributions made by universities and governments to foster entrepreneurship. As a result of their research, the field of entrepreneurship has been irrevocably transformed, expanding both scholarly understanding of entrepreneurship and shaping thought leadership and policy to foster entrepreneurial activity. Thanks to their research, convincing evidence exists that organizations and institutions beyond the entrepreneurs, most prominently universities and governments, can boost or suppress entrepreneurial activity.

1.1 The Global Award for Entrepreneurship Research: A brief background

The Global Award for Entrepreneurship Research was initiated in 1996 and has become the most prestigious award for entrepreneurship research. It consists of 100,000 euros and a statuette designed by the Swedish sculptor Carl Milles. According to the statutes, the award should be given to “a person who has produced scientific work of outstanding quality and importance, thereby giving a significant contribution to theory building concerning entrepreneurship and small business development, the role and importance of new firm formation and the role of SMEs in economic development.” The main aims of the award are (1) to highlight the importance of research produced in the areas of entrepreneurship and small business, (2) to further stimulate and promote research within these fields, and (3) to disseminate state-of-the-art research among scholars, practitioners, and people involved in small business development. (For a detailed description, see Henrekson & Lundström, 2009.)

The domain of entrepreneurship research is broad (Carlsson et al., 2013; Bacq et al., 2025), which means that entrepreneurship research that can be considered for the award can be undertaken in several different disciplines, including economics, sociology, history, business administration, management, economic geography, and psychology. Any aspect of entrepreneurship research is eligible, including the environment and the organizations in which entrepreneurship is conducted, the character of the entrepreneur (personality, cognitive,

and affective aspects), or the role of the entrepreneur and/or the entrepreneurial function in a wider sense (at the level of the community, region, country, or industry). One ambition of the Prize Committee is that the award-winning contributions, over a longer time span, reflect the extraordinary breadth of entrepreneurship as a research field in the social sciences. The key criteria for prize-worthy contributions are originality and influence (Braunerhjelm & Henrekson, 2009). Contributions can be influential in many ways. A contribution can, for example, be influential because it has had a significant impact on subsequent scientific work, advanced entrepreneurship as a field of research (by creating important databases or by starting influential journals, scientific communities, etc.), furthered entrepreneurship education and training at the academic level, and/or influenced practice, policymaking, or society more broadly.

When selecting prize-worthy contributions, the Prize Committee emphasizes the qualitative aspects of candidates' contributions. Quantitative metrics, such as citation counts and impact factor-adjusted publication volumes, do provide important information about candidates, but will never replace qualitative judgment. This means that quantity will never substitute for quality, and it is even possible for a scholar to receive the award for a single landmark contribution.

1.2 Short biographies of the 2026 winners: Albert N. Link and Donald S. Siegel

Albert N. Link was born in 1949, in Alexandria, Virginia. He attended primary and secondary school in that area before continuing his education at the University of Richmond in Richmond, Virginia. He received a BSc in mathematics from the University of Richmond (Phi Beta Kappa) in 1971, and a PhD degree in economics from Tulane University in 1976. After earning his PhD, he joined the economics faculty at Auburn University, served as a Scholar-in-Residence at Syracuse University (summer 1981), and joined the economics faculty at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) in 1982.

Professor Link's public service includes serving as a member of the National Research Council's research team at the National Academy of Sciences, which conducted the 2010 evaluation of the United States Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program. He testified before the United States Congress in 2011 on the economic benefits associated with the SBIR program. He also served from 2007 to 2012 as a U.S. Representative to the United Nations (in Geneva, Switzerland) in the capacity of co-vice chairperson of the Team of

Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies Initiative for the Economic Commission for Europe.

Professor Link serves as an active member of a research team funded by the United States National Institute of Standards and Technology, studying the economic impacts of investments in U.S. neutron research sources and facilities, and as an advisor to the research team focusing on the SBIR program in the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute within the Department of Health and Human Services at the United States National Institutes of Health. He is founder/editor of *Annals of Science and Technology Policy*. He has also been the Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Technology Transfer*.

Donald S. Siegel was born in 1959 in Brooklyn, New York. He received his bachelor's degree in economics and his master's and doctoral degrees in business economics from Columbia University. He then served as a Sloan Foundation post-doctoral fellow at the National Bureau of Economic Research. Professor Siegel also taught at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Stony Brook, the University of Nottingham, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, where he served as Chair of the Economics Department, and the University of California, Riverside, where he served as Associate Dean for Graduate Studies. Between 2008 and 2016, Professor Siegel served as Dean of the School of Business at the University at Albany, State University of New York. He currently serves as Foundation Professor of Public Policy and Management in the School of Public Affairs (SPA) and Co-Executive Director of the Global Center for Technology Transfer (GCTT) at Arizona State University. Between 2017 and 2022, he served as Director of SPA.

Professor Siegel also served as a consultant and advisor to numerous organizations, including the UN, the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM), Lawrence Berkeley National Lab, the Council on Competitiveness, the UK, Italian, and Swedish governments, the Department of Justice, and the Environmental Protection Agency. He was a member of the Advisory Committee to the Secretary of Commerce on "Measuring Innovation in the 21st Century Economy", chaired a NASEM Committee on "Best Practice in National Innovation Programs for Flexible Electronics", and was a member of NASEM committee evaluating the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Program. In 2011, Siegel testified before the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology regarding reauthorization of the SBIR program.

Professor Siegel is a former editor of numerous journals, most notably the *Journal of Technology Transfer*, the *Journal of Management Studies*, and *Academy of Management Perspectives*, and the *Journal of Business Venturing*. He has also co-edited 53 special issues of leading journals in management and economics. He is an elected Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and the Academy of Management (AOM).

2. Overview of contributions

Professors Link and Siegel have made several key contributions to the scholarly field of entrepreneurship. These contributions have taken the form of publications in books and in the world's leading economics, entrepreneurship, and management journals, as well as in their tireless engagement in overseeing the development and engagement of key scholarly journals, such as the *Journal of Technology Transfer*.

Going into the current century, research and thinking on entrepreneurship focused almost exclusively on the entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial firms themselves. The field of entrepreneurship and small business economics up to that time clearly viewed entrepreneurs and their firms as islands—remote, isolated, and fueled by an entrepreneurial drive that seemingly was beyond the reach of other influences. This changed dramatically, thanks to the painstaking research and efforts of Professors Link and Siegel. A constant theme in their work has been that entrepreneurs and their firms are beneficiaries of the institutions, organizations, policies, and people around them.

2.1 Technology transfer

Link's and Siegel's most important research has provided the foundations for understanding the role of technology transfer in fueling entrepreneurship. While research had focused on linking technology transfer to innovation, the role of entrepreneurship was overlooked before their work appeared. Most notably, in their article on the Research Triangle Park (Siegel et al., 2003a), they were among the first researchers to identify and measure the impact of universities on entrepreneurs achieved through transferring technology.

Their first collaborative work on technology transfer focused on university technology transfer in the United States. The first paper on that topic was an NBER Working Paper (Siegel

et al., 1999). A revised version was published in *Research Policy* in 2003 (Siegel et al., 2003a). Soon thereafter, they collaborated on a number of foundational technology transfer papers related to the Bayh-Dole Act of 1980 (Siegel et al., 2003b; Siegel et al., 2004; Link & Siegel, 2006; Link et al., 2007; Link & Siegel, 2007; Link et al., 2011). The academic importance of these collaborative efforts, as well as their independent studies on technology transfer, is evidenced by their book on university technology transfer and academic entrepreneurship (Link et al., 2015), published by the University of Chicago Press (and translated into Chinese in 2018).

Equally important as their collaborative research on university technology transfer is the body of scholarship inspired by their work, particularly the stream of research on technology transfer activities within U.S. federal laboratories following Link et al. (2011). Indeed, one could argue that both scholars have laid the intellectual foundation for academic inquiry into the role of entrepreneurship in the public sector. Professor Link's empirical and theoretical expertise has naturally guided his contributions toward public policy, while Professor Siegel's management background has oriented his work towards public administration.

Professor Link's recent work on technology transfer and knowledge transfer builds on his theoretical models of public sector entrepreneurship (Link & Oliver, 2020; Link & Scott, 2021; Link, 2021). Professor Siegel's recent work on federal technology transfer analyzes micro data collected at the scientist level. This research has resulted in key publications, such as Waldman et al. (2022).

Technology transfer is now an established and recognized field in entrepreneurship research. However, prior to the seminal research by Professors Link and Siegel, technology transfer and entrepreneurship had little to do with each other. Hence, they have left their indelible footprint in identifying the key role played by technology transfer in entrepreneurship, which in turn has created a thriving area of research in the larger academic field of entrepreneurship.

2.2 Policy towards innovative entrepreneurship

Initially, the literature on entrepreneurship was largely focused on understanding the phenomenon per se. The focus of the incipient literature remained at the level of the individual or the firm. The role of policy towards entrepreneurship, and especially innovative entrepreneurship, generally went unnoticed. With a series of pathbreaking studies, Link and

Siegel changed the scope of entrepreneurship research by extending the focus to include policy towards innovative entrepreneurship.

While the extant research had probed why entrepreneurial firms are innovative and how they are able to innovate, the new stream of research initiated by Link and Siegel refocused the analytical lens of research to ask how public policy can enhance entrepreneurial innovation. Some of this research is more general and theoretical, such as Autio et al. (2014). However, the most impactful research by Link and Siegel has focused on the impact of specific policies on innovative entrepreneurship. For example, they published a series of articles analyzing how and why the Bayh-Dole Act in the United States ignited entrepreneurial innovation. While the extant research had analyzed the effects of the Bayh-Dole Act, the focus had been primarily on innovative activity more broadly. Instead, Link and Siegel showed how and why the Bayh-Dole Act impacted entrepreneurship, and in particular how it influenced the innovative activity of entrepreneurial firms (Grimaldi et al., 2011; Link et al., 2011),

Both Albert Link and Donald Siegel have been leaders in analyzing the impact of the United States Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program on innovative entrepreneurship. One example is Link and Scott (2009), where they make a specific policy recommendation to enhance the efficacy of government policy to stimulate innovative entrepreneurship. Other co-authored papers provide systematic analyses of the impact of the SBIR on entrepreneurship (Audretsch et al., 2002; Link & Scott, 2010; Link et al., 2014). Further example of research analyzing the impact of a specific public policy on innovative entrepreneurship involves the poignant study of the United States Advanced Technology Program (Hall et al., 2001).

The creation of Research Triangle Park in North Carolina is lauded as an exemplary public policy that not only fueled innovative entrepreneurship but ultimately transformed an impoverished region into one of the most dynamic and thriving entrepreneurial ecosystems in the world. The pioneering studies meticulously analyzing the impact of this policy initiative were conducted by Link (Link, 1995; Link & Scott 2003a). Thanks to the pioneering research by Professors Link and Siegel, the role of public policy in shaping innovative entrepreneurship is now fully embedded in the scholarly field of entrepreneurship.

2.3 The entrepreneurial university

Another area where Link and Siegel have had a major impact on entrepreneurship research concerns what they characterize as the entrepreneurial university. The traditional role of the university in society was shaped by the Humboldt Model. An invisible—but certainly real—barrier impeded interactions between the university, on the one hand, and society and the economy, on the other. Link and Siegel paved the way for a new and updated understanding of the role of the university in society and the economy, positioning the university as a partner that both influences societal and economic well-being and is, in turn, shaped by societal forces. This new role of the university is well articulated in Link and Scott (2003b). Similarly, the evolving role and identity of the university are highlighted in Link and Scott (2005). Siegel et al. (2007) analyze how the emergence of the entrepreneurial university affects society. How faculties are organized, managed, and prioritize their activities within the entrepreneurial university are examined in Link et al. (2008), while the extent to which the emergence of the entrepreneurial university has influenced societal norms and behavior is analyzed by Balven et al. (2018) and Siegel and Wright (2015).

Thanks to Link's and Siegel's research, scholarship and thinking about the role of the university in society and the economy have fundamentally changed. They compellingly demonstrate that the university is no longer an ivory tower isolated from the rest of society, but rather an institution deeply integrated into—and instrumental for—societal well-being and economic prosperity. In the process, they have fostered innovative entrepreneurship among academics and university staff around the world.

2.4 Public sector entrepreneurship

In the 1980s and 1990s, the scholarly literature largely viewed entrepreneurship as a private-sector phenomenon. Publications in leading academic journals—not only those focused on entrepreneurship but across the social sciences—reflected a clear private-sector bias, or at least priority, in entrepreneurship research. Over time, the important role of the public sector in implementing policies to stimulate entrepreneurship came to be recognized. However, Link and Siegel also paved the way for a different perspective on the role of the public sector in entrepreneurship, emphasizing entrepreneurial behavior not merely as a response to government policies, but as an activity undertaken within the public sector itself.

In the trailblazing book *Government as Entrepreneur*, published by Oxford University Press, the important role of entrepreneurial behavior in the public sector was introduced and analyzed (Link & Link, 2009). This theme was further developed in Leyden and Link (2015). Likewise, Waldman and Siegel (2008) examined the importance of entrepreneurship in the public-sector context. In Audretsch et al. (2020), the authors demonstrate how and why entrepreneurship has the potential to serve as a driving force within the public sector. Thus, a key scholarly contribution made by Link and Siegel is their recognition that the public sector not only shapes entrepreneurship through policy but can also influence it by behaving entrepreneurially as an organization in its own right.

3 Research and societal impact

Beyond their profound influence on scholarly thinking about entrepreneurship, Link and Siegel have made two additional significant contributions. First, their inspired leadership has coalesced a vibrant scholarly community in the field of technology transfer and entrepreneurship. Second, they have generated substantial societal impact by translating their research into policy and practice. These dimensions of impact are fully commensurate with the highest levels of engagement and societal relevance required by the Global Award and exemplified by previous awardees.

3.1 Coalescing a scholarly community

When Professors Link and Siegel began pioneering research in the then largely uncharted field of technology transfer, they were essentially working in isolation. Without the development of a broader research community, their own work would have had limited impact. They were instrumental in creating what is now a thriving and internationally recognized academic community devoted to technology transfer research—something that did not exist when they began.

In building this research community, Link and Siegel inspired a new generation of scholars and fostered collaboration through workshops, seminars, and conferences. Over the years, they have likely hosted more than one hundred such events—an extraordinary achievement. They also secured substantial external funding from leading agencies and helped integrate this emerging field into major professional organizations, including the Academy of Management and the American Economic Association. Furthermore, they worked closely with leading scholarly journals in economics and management, serving as guest editors for numerous

special issues devoted to technology transfer. Professor Siegel has served as guest editor for more than 50 special issues, many in top-tier journals in economics, management, and entrepreneurship. Professor Link has been similarly prolific.

The remarkable number of special issues reflects their sustained efforts to connect previously unconnected researchers and consolidate the emerging field of technology transfer and entrepreneurship. These initiatives galvanized what has become a large and vibrant scholarly community.

Most prominently, Professors Link and Siegel created, nurtured, and expanded the Technology Transfer Society from a small, primarily U.S.-based group into a thriving international organization with a committed global membership. Through its annual meetings, the Society became the focal point of the emerging research community they sought to develop. Together with Mike Wright, they provided inspired leadership in the Society's early years, recruiting young scholars from a broad spectrum of disciplines worldwide. Under their leadership, the organization secured funding from prominent institutions such as the Kauffman Foundation and the U.S. National Science Foundation to host highly visible international conferences as membership expanded rapidly.

To further advance the field, Albert Link assumed the role of Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Technology Transfer (JTT)*. At the time, JTT primarily served practitioners and policymakers. Established in 1977 by the Technology Transfer Society, it initially published conference proceedings, with editorial responsibility rotating among non-academic members. In 1996, Albert Link became editor and soon invited Donald Siegel to join as co-editor. Together, they transformed the journal into a leading scholarly outlet in innovation and entrepreneurship. In 2024, JTT had a five-year impact factor of 5.4. More importantly, it has become a highly respected platform for research on technology transfer and entrepreneurship.

Today, the scholarly community in this field is vibrant and internationally recognized, owing much to Link and Siegel's tireless efforts and sustained leadership.

3.2 Societal impact

The work of Professors Link and Siegel is distinguished not only by theoretical innovation but also by their active engagement in translating research into practice. They have worked

extensively with government agencies and nonprofit organizations to convert academic research into innovation through entrepreneurship.

For example, both served as key members of a team of leading academics and practitioners evaluating the impact of the U.S. Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Program under the auspices of the National Academy of Sciences. This program seeks to translate research into innovation through entrepreneurship. Their work included developing concrete recommendations to improve the process of technology transfer.

Their societal engagement also extends to collaboration with local and state governments. Professor Link has worked extensively with Research Triangle Park in North Carolina, while Professor Siegel has collaborated closely with the State of New York to promote innovative entrepreneurship. Both have worked with multiple federal agencies, including the Advanced Technology Program (ATP), the National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST), the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation.

In sum, Professors Link and Siegel have made instrumental contributions to thought leadership in both the public and private sectors and have significantly influenced policies and practices aimed at enhancing the translation of research into innovative entrepreneurship.

3.3 Publication impact

Albert Link has published more than 300 academic articles in leading journals in economics and management, including the *American Economic Review*, *Journal of Political Economy*, *Review of Economics and Statistics*, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, and *Research Policy*. He has also authored over 40 books with major academic publishers such as Oxford University Press and the University of Chicago Press. According to Google Scholar, his work has received more than 36,000 citations, and he has an h-index of 83.

Donald Siegel is likewise a prolific and highly influential scholar. He has published more than 150 articles in top journals such as the *American Economic Review*, *Economic Journal*, *Review of Economics and Statistics*, *Journal of Business Venturing*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Academy of Management Journal*, and *Research Policy*. He has also authored 14 books with leading academic publishers, including Oxford University Press and the

University of Chicago Press. According to Google Scholar, his work has received over 93,000 citations, and he has an h-index of 118.

4 Conclusion

The case for awarding the Global Award for Entrepreneurship Research to Professor Albert N. Link and Professor Donald S. Siegel rests firmly on the three pillars stipulated for recipients: impact on scholarly research, leadership in building a vibrant research community, and significant societal impact derived from research on entrepreneurship.

They are in a class of their own in creating, developing, and nurturing what is now a thriving research domain—technology transfer and entrepreneurship. Their research, spanning economics, management, and entrepreneurship, has laid the foundation for a new generation of scholars analyzing the nexus between technology transfer and entrepreneurial activity.

Through sustained leadership, they have coalesced a broad and devoted international community of scholars. Their efforts in building networks, establishing publication outlets, and organizing numerous scholarly events have transformed academic research in this area into a vibrant global community.

With respect to societal impact, they have led the way in translational research and engagement, promoting the transfer of basic research into innovative entrepreneurship. Thanks to their contributions, technology transfer and entrepreneurship have become not only scholarly topics but also practical mechanisms implemented across universities, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations worldwide.

Entrepreneurship has increasingly been recognized as the missing link between knowledge creation and economic performance. The seminal contributions of Professor Link and Professor Siegel have left a lasting and indelible imprint on research, policy, and practice in entrepreneurship.

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