

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
REGENTS COMMUNICATION

ACTION REQUEST

Subject: Subcontract Agreement between the University of Michigan and NewHaptics Corp.

Action Requested: Authorization to enter into Agreement

Preamble:

A statutory conflict of interest situation was identified by the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects while reviewing the Proposal Approval Form which then triggered a review by the UMOR Conflict of Interest Review Committee. A plan for management of the possible risks associated with the conflict of interest was then developed and approved by the Committee and agreed to by the parties involved.

This proposed agreement (“Agreement”) falls under the State of Michigan Conflict of Interest Statute because Professors Richard Brent Gillespie and Maire Sile O’Modhrain, and Dr. Alexander Russomanno are employees of the University of Michigan (“University”), and are partial owners of NewHaptics Corp. The law permits such an Agreement provided it is disclosed to the Board of Regents (“Regents”) of the University of Michigan and approved in advance by a 2/3 vote.

Background:

Dr. Richard Brent Gillespie, a Professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering, Dr. Maire Sile O’Modhrain, a Professor in the Department of Information, and Dr. Alexander Russomanno, a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Department of Mechanical Engineering, are the partial owners of a for-profit company called NewHaptics Corp. (the “Company”). The Company wishes to fund an NSF (prime) Phase I STTR project entitled “Microfluidic technology for a full-page braille and graphical tactile display” (ORSP #19-PAF03591) in the School of Information under the direction of Dr. O’Modhrain. The purpose of this project is to create a full-page braille and graphical tactile display.

Agreement Terms:

The terms of the Agreement conform to University policy. The period of performance for the project is approximately one (1) year. The amount of funding support will not exceed \$68,030. Since research projects are often amended, this agreement includes provisions for changes in time and scope. University procedures for approval of these changes will be followed and additional conflict of interest review will be done as appropriate.

Impact of the Agreement:

The Agreement will support an effort by Dr. O'Modhrain to use her expertise and University laboratory, as well as other University resources, to provide people who are visually impaired with access to a device that can display both refreshable braille and tactile graphics.

Recommendations:

This matter has been reviewed and approved by the UMOR Conflict of Interest Review Committee. In light of this disclosure and our finding that the Agreement was negotiated in conformance with standard University practices, I recommend that the Board of Regents approve the University's entering into this Agreement with NewHaptics Corp.

Respectfully submitted,



S. Jack Hu
Vice President for Research

May 2019