United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary

Intellectual Property – Driver of Innovation:
Making Our Lives Healthier, Safer, and More Productive

May 2, 2017

Questions for the Record

QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR MAZIE HIRONO

For All Witnesses:

1. Last year, a report the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) that found that at the current rate of progress, women inventors will not reach parity in patenting until 2092. Only 18.8 of all patents had at least one women inventor in 2010. In addition, where women are the primary inventor, their patents are concentrated in areas such as travel goods, personal belongings, jewelry, and apparel.

    a. What is your company doing to encourage more innovation by women?

    The fundamental first step is to ensure we have a diverse R&D workforce and an inclusive, innovative culture. DuPont Pioneer partners with various Agriculture and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) related organizations to proactively encourage young women to enter the agriculture and science fields of study, helping to build our future talent pipeline. We also require hiring managers to interview a diverse slate of candidates, and encourage them to look at all competencies and attributes a diverse candidate can bring to the team, breaking the cycle of quickly hiring the most traditionally qualified candidate. We review our key workforce metrics bi-annually to ensure we are making progress with hiring, retaining, and promoting women. Leaders are encouraged to build diverse work/project teams to not only provide participants with development opportunity, but to encourage new and innovative thinking. The DuPont Pioneer R&D leadership team is committed to creating a culture that encourages all employees to innovate.

2. In an article in the April 2017 issue of the Atlantic, entitled "Why is Silicon Valley So Awful to Women?", the author cites a report from the Center for Talent Innovation which found that when women drop out of tech, it is not typically for family reasons or because they dislike the work. Rather, they drop out for reasons such as feeling stalled in their career or undermining behavior from managers.

    a. What best practices do you use at your company to encourage women to remain at your company and support them in pursuing patents for the work they are doing?

We have made progress over the past few years with increasing female representation at higher levels of R&D leadership and continue to make this a priority. In addition, the R&D leadership team participates in an annual process of identifying top talent specifically from our diversity population (including females and minorities) and ensuring that career development plans and opportunities are adequate to retain and develop these employees, including assigning leadership sponsors to advocate career placement and advancement. Targeted talent development opportunities are also available to our female researchers; such as communication training to help reduce the tendency for women to let men take the lead on projects and meetings, as well as encouraging participation in programs such as the Pioneer's Women's Network and Inspiring Women in STEM conference.

For Dr. Gutterson:

1. DuPont Pioneer licenses its patents to other companies. This past November you announced a licensing deal with the plant sciences firm Agragen who is using the technology to enhance omega-3 fatty acids in plants.

    a. How does having a strong intellectual property right allow you to collaborate with others to advance science and technology innovations?

    Patents protect our investment in seed and crop quality enhancement. In addition, published patent documents offer a vast accessible source of cutting edge global technological information and provide important information about our areas of interest and expertise to potential collaborators. Many of the technology innovations that DuPont Pioneer patents have applications outside agriculture or beyond DuPont Pioneer's core crops. DuPont Pioneer enters into collaborations with smaller biotechnology and agricultural companies and with universities to fully harness the potential of our technology innovations. As one example, DuPont Pioneer intends to enable others wanting to develop agricultural products using CRISPR-Cas through access to intellectual property (IP), technology capabilities, infrastructure and scientific expertise.