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Research and Development for the Domestic Petroleum Industry

Two major changes have taken place within the domestic petroleum industry. First, the major oil companies have reduced their internal R&D activities significantly. Second, these companies also have essentially abandoned onshore exploration and development in the continental U.S. These actions have left future development of this region largely to the smaller companies and independents.

Historically, small companies and independents obtained their new science and technology largely through the 'trickle-down' process from the majors and larger service companies. With these sources rapidly disappearing, new sources of science and technology are needed.

Some universities and state geological surveys are attempting to fill this void. These efforts are being accomplished through the development of consortia with these industries, through directed studies in cooperation with local geological and engineering societies, and organizations such as the Petroleum Technology Transfer Council.

Examples include petroleum play-based studies to identify new reservoirs and other bypassed production in mature areas, simplified processes for reservoir delineation and characterization, and a host of other needs identified by domestic operators and consultants.