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**THE ROLE OF PILLAR UNIVERSITY IN THE REGIONAL INNOVATION  
 ECOSYSTEM DEVELOPMENT**

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The study is devoted to understanding the role of the University in the development of regional innovation ecosystem. The focus of the authors of this study is on universities that have a special status of a reference University in the Russian region. Supporting universities, which appeared in the Russian education system in 2015, designated as scientific and educational complexes, which carry out research and train personnel for the region in breakthrough areas of development. The paper shows that the basis of the regional innovation ecosystem formed by the «triple helix» model connecting business, government and universities. Universities have an advantage — their impact can extend to all stages of the innovation process. The study identifies the problems of development of the innovation ecosystem of the Russian region, the solution of which largely depends on the success of the supporting University.

*Keywords:* regional innovation ecosystem, «triple helix», pillar university, innovation process, «entrepreneurial university».

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