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Two biotechnology certificate programs established at community colleges to combat critical skilled employee shortfall

Three community colleges to offer program in spring, with two more joining in the fall

PHILADELPHIA – In partnership with regional community colleges and biotechnology companies, the Life Science Career Alliance (LSCA) has developed two industry-validated college certificate programs designed to fill increasing numbers of skilled employee shortfalls.

One of the certificates is for cell/tissue growth, while the other is for fermentation. Both models contain components of quality control/quality assurance to ensure a standardized training need and a more efficient curriculum.

The biotechnology certificate program is being developed through a \$1.5 million Department of Labor High Growth Job Training Initiative (HGJT) grant that the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board (PWIB) received in 2006 to serve 14 counties in the tri-state region. The LSCA is administering the grant for the PWIB and also has engaged the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) to manage the curriculum development process and evaluate this unique collaboration.

Not only will the program create career pipelines and enhancement opportunities for classroom participants, but it will usher in a new way to enhance existing skills, training courses and recruiting trends throughout the region. Upon completion of the course, the program features an internship component that introduces students to real life lab experiences and workforce skills.

"The Delaware Valley is a hotbed for biotechnology; future industry growth in the region will be dependent on the continued ability to supply qualified workers," said James Logan, the Biotech Project Senior Program Manager at the LSCA. "Working with this innovative industry enables Life Science Career Alliance and workforce practitioners to develop programs to meet the knowledge, skills and abilities required for a Biotechnology Technician. Even better, we were able to assemble five community colleges to work with industry leaders to design, create and validate a curriculum that will be taught identically at each campus, a rarity today."

Logan noted that no other local initiative of this kind links colleges and industry so closely together to create a standardized biotechnology, industry-driven education and workforce model.

"Work in the biotechnology field requires a unique set of skills that these certificate programs will now be able to teach to their students," said Loreen Bloodgood, Trinity Manager for Global Manufacturing and Supply (GMS) Biopharm at GlaxoSmithKline. "These programs offer a new way to potentially identify the employees that will be needed in the future as the biopharmaceuticals business continues to grow."

(more)

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Logan noted that the certificate program will serve up to 100 participants, half consisting of college students and half incumbent workers. Depending on the participating college those who complete either program may receive college credits and all will receive a "Biotechnology Technician Certificate" of completion.

Burlington County Community College, Montgomery County Community College and Bucks County Community College will begin offering the certificate programs during the 2009 spring semester. Community College of Philadelphia and Camden County College will begin during the 2009 fall semester. Logan said other community colleges may begin offering the course as well.

Industry partners include Tengion, Centocor, GlaxoSmithKline, Strategic Diagnostics, DuPont, ImClone, and The Fraunhofer Center for Molecular Biotechnology, Kensey Nash Corp., LifeSensors Inc., Wyeth and Morphotek.

About the Life Science Career Alliance (LSCA)

The Life Science Career Alliance (LSCA) is a nonprofit dedicated to mobilizing regional resources to ensure that a skilled workforce is available to support the life science sectors of our economy, including hospitals and pharmaceutical, biotechnology, medical device and diagnostic companies. LSCA seeks to promote the regional economy and workforce development through career enhancement for adults and youth.

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