

sf poised to lead in biotech

\$1.1 million in grants for job training

San Francisco, birthplace of biotechnology, is poised to benefit from two major grants that will train workers for critical jobs. Biotechnology is one of the fastest-growing industries in the nation, with a high demand for entry-level workers and two- and four-year college graduates. In the Bay Area, biotech accounts for more than 80,000 jobs, and is expected to grow to more than 120,000 jobs by 2010.

Because of the fast growth of the industry, experts predict critical staffing shortages within the next decade. The largest number of jobs are likely to be for research associates and lab technicians, and in manufacturing.

"The good news for San Franciscans is that workforce demands offer opportunities to extend employment within the industry to previously under-represented minority populations," says Terri Feeley, executive director of SFWorks, a Chamber affiliate.

\$600,000 National Science Foundation Grant to Train New Workers

SFWorks and City College of San Francisco (CCSF) are recipients of a \$600,000 National Science Foundation Partnerships for Innovation grant to expand SFWorks' successful On-Ramp program, a feeder into CCSF's nationally recognized Bridge to Biotech program, to increase the number of low-income, under-represented minorities in the burgeoning biotechnology industry.

The On-Ramp program prepares students to participate in CCSF's pre-

certificate program, Bridge to Biotech, and for subsidized internships in Bay Area biotech labs. CCSF created the Bridge to Biotech program to increase the representation of minority students in its nationally recognized biotech certificate program.

"A major challenge we face when focusing on high-demand, high-wage and high-value-added employment initiatives, is to commit ourselves to providing opportunities and access to people who are sometimes penalized by their lack of educational preparation and social circumstances. The beauty and significance of the On-Ramp to Biotech Program is that it is a pathway for a number of economically and educationally disenfranchised students," says Philip Day, CCSF chancellor.

The Bridge to Biotech program is offered at CCSF's Southeast (Bay View-Hunters Point) and Mission District campuses, serving predominantly African American and Latino students, respectively. SFWorks' On-Ramp program, now offered only at the Southeast campus, targets a lower-skilled population and includes additional support to help participants upgrade their skills, secure jobs and succeed in the industry. During the semester-long Bridge to Biotech program, SFWorks places students in subsidized, part-time laboratory internships. Interns have worked in labs at UCSF, the US Department of Agriculture, Biometrix and CCSF.

When a student completes the On-Ramp program and the Bridge to Biotech program, SFWorks assists in finding jobs within the bioscience industry and provides support to encourage students to continue their education.

To date, 75 percent of On-Ramp students have secured biotech jobs and 80 percent are continuing their bioscience education to advance their skills and income-earning potential.

"The On-Ramp program has shown remarkable success in moving low-skilled, low-income adults through the workforce pipeline," says Feeley.

The NSF grant will enable the On-Ramp program to expand to additional campuses and populations, including CCSF's Mission Campus, and to explore offering the program to limited-English speakers from under-served Asian, Filipino, Pacific Islander, Latino and Eastern European communities.

\$500,000 Grant to Refine & Expand Bridge to Biotech

In addition, CCSF received a second NSF grant of \$500,000 over three years to refine the Bridge to Biotech curriculum while continuing to offer it at CCSF and to pilot test the program at two other community colleges, Santa Ana College and Austin Community College.

payroll tax exemption for new biotech firms

In an effort to continue to attract biotech firms to San Francisco, the Board of Supervisors successfully passed legislation authored by Supervisors Michela Alioto-Pier, Fiona Ma and then-Supervisor Tony Hall to give a 7 1/2 year payroll-tax exemption to newly located biotech companies. Todd Ewing, SFCED managing director, played a key role in working with the supervisors to make this economic incentive a reality.

The tax exemption has already been a contributing factor in the purchase of 508,000 square feet of commercial space in Mission Bay by Alexandria Real Estate Equities Inc., a real-estate investment trust that includes pharmaceuticals Pfizer and Merck as tenants. The location of UCSF at Mission Bay is already an incentive for biotech companies to move nearby. The new tax credits offer an additional "carrot" for the city and the San Francisco CED to use to attract firms to the city.

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