

10-1-2005

A Local Biotech Experiment: FAU is Administering the Pilot Course While IRCC Provides Classrooms and Labs

Charlie Reed
Indian River Press Journal

Jose V. Lopez
Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution, joslo@nova.edu

Find out more information about [Nova Southeastern University](#) and the [Oceanographic Center](#).

Follow this and additional works at: http://nsuworks.nova.edu/occ_facarticles

 Part of the [Marine Biology Commons](#), and the [Oceanography and Atmospheric Sciences and Meteorology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Reed, Charlie. "A Local Biotech Experiment: FAU is Administering the Pilot Course While IRCC Provides Classrooms and Labs." *Indian River Press Journal*, , sec. A1 & A5, October 01, 2005.

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Marine and Environmental Sciences at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Oceanography Faculty Articles by an authorized administrator of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact nsuworks@nova.edu.

A local biotech experiment

FAU is administering the pilot course while IRCC provides classrooms and labs



Photos by MATTHEW HATAJCZAK staff photographer

In their biotechnology lab at Indian River Community College in Fort Pierce, students Steve Elliser and Barbara Ingram, right, of Vero Beach, collect their cell samples from teaching assistant Jane Thompson for an experiment in DNA cloning and transformation.

"It's the direction many people would like to go.
I can't say it's the top industry now, but it will be in the future."

Gwenda Thompson
Workforce Development Board of the Treasure Coast executive director

By Charlie Reed
staff writer

Eric Wagner thought he could grow his career in aquaculture research at Maritech LLC with a marine biology degree from the University of Miami.

But when the Vero Beach-based company began expanding into the commercial food fish market and as a supplier to aquariums and zoos, Wagner found himself angling for a new set of skills.

So, along with about 20 other students, he enrolled in a new Certificate of Biotechnology program offered on the Treasure Coast.

He wanted to brush up on molecular biology and learn complex laboratory techniques now used in his field more and more.

"I never thought I would need those skills," said Wagner, 32. "It's nice to be able to catch up though."

Eyes on the future

Florida Atlantic University is administering the pilot program — funded by a \$2.3 million federal grant from the Department of Labor — and Indian River Community College provides classrooms and labs at its main campus in Fort Pierce.

Experts predict trained biotech workers will be in high demand in the future — especially if plans for Scripps Florida research institute overcome court challenges by environmentalists who say the project's site is too environmentally sensitive to support development.

Biotechnology is not the fastest-growing industry on the Treasure Coast, "but it's the one everyone is most focused on," said Gwenda Thompson, executive director of the Workforce Development Board of the Treasure Coast.

"It's the direction many people would like to go," said Thompson. "I can't say it's the

See BIOTECH, A5



Students Howard Wier and Robyn Baber work on a similar experiment in the biotechnology class. The class, led by molecular biologist Jose Lopez of Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution, is part of a new program administered through Florida Atlantic University and funded by a \$2.3 million federal grant from the Department of Labor.

Certificate of Biotechnology

For more information on the Certificate of Biotechnology program, contact David Binninger at FAU at (561) 291-3323 or drop by any One-Stop Career Center or call the Workforce Development Board of the Treasure Coast at (772) 335-3030/wwu.trojobs.org.

WHO QUALIFIES: College graduates with bachelor's degrees in math or science

WHERE: Indian River Community College, main campus in Fort Pierce

WHEN: Night class, three times a week

WHY: Program graduates qualify for job work with biotech companies

Treasure Coast Newspapers 45

BIOTECH

FROM A1

top industry now but it will be in the future."

Matter of time

St. Lucie County officially has jumped on the biotech bandwagon.

The first tenant of the county's planned 1,600-acre research park was announced in late September.

Pure Produce Greenhouses, a hydroponics vegetable grower, is relocating from Canada and expected to bring 150 jobs to the area.

With an emphasis on luring agricultural research-based companies, county officials hope the research park — anchored by U.S. Department of Agriculture and the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences — becomes a high-tech haven.

"There's an excellent research base there," said Diana Robinson, president and chief executive officer of Bio-Florida, the state's trade organization based in West Palm Beach.

But it will take time, Robinson said.

"You can't get a biotech company up and running in a month."

Still, "you're already seeing the benefits," Robinson said. "Companies of all sizes are coming to this area. It's very much of a network-based industry."

-charlie.reed@scripps.com

-Post a comment on TCPalm.com