



## Biotech Industry Booming in Florida

The biotech industry is heating up in Florida. The biotechnology cluster in Palm Beach, Florida, is growing to rival leading biotech job market areas like California, Colorado, and Boston. Many biotech jobs can be found here and there will be many more in the near future.



According to Brenda Workman, Director of Business Retention for Enterprise Florida Inc., the state's leading economic development organization, "With the location of world-class life sciences research institutions, Florida is poised to

become a major market for the life sciences industry." Richard Houghten, president and CEO of Torrey Pines in San Diego, California, told the *St. Petersburg Times* in May 2007, "Florida is interested and motivated and they seem to really get it."

Former Florida Governor Jeb Bush says of the biotech industry, "This is a [field] where more innovations are going to take place in the next decade...than in any other human endeavor."

The biotech industry is linked into the life sciences, and this corresponds well to Florida's and Palm Beach's strengths. Florida has one of the largest medical device industries of any state. In addition, the very tax-friendly state of Florida is ranked number one in effective economic development initiatives for the biotech industry. The state is second in the nation for total number of biotech industry start-up companies, and third in the number of new biotech branches, from which many of the new biotech jobs will develop, especially those for research technicians and assistants.

At the heart of the Floridian biotech industry is Palm Beach. There are plenty of elements in Palm Beach that are attractive to the industry. Florida Atlantic University (FAU) and the Scripps Research Institute of Florida (lured out of La Jolla, California, by financial incentives in 2003) are always eager to collaborate and partner with the community of innovative companies that are pushing the envelope of the biotech industry in Palm Beach County. Palm Beach County is already the home to Florida's largest pharmaceutical company, Biotest Pharmaceuticals. Scripps has four main biotech-industry-related research divisions: Cancer Biology, Infectology, Molecular Therapeutics, and the Translational Research Institute.

In acknowledgment of this explosive field of research and development, the Palm Beach Community College (PBCC) now offers two degree programs in biotechnology.

In 2007, the Business Development Board forged a coalition between the state, Palm Beach County, the Town of Jupiter, and Florida Atlantic University to successfully recruit the Max Planck Society to Palm Beach County. The Max Planck Institute, Florida, housed in a 100,000 sq. ft., state-of-the-art facility next to Scripps and financed by the state's Innovation Incentive Fund, will have laboratories and departments in bio-imaging, bio-sensing, and cellular mechanisms.

The infrastructure is right in Palm Beach, as well. For instance, the Enterprise Development Corporation (EDC) of South Florida offers wet lab mentoring for entrepreneurs, and has established a small incubator facility in Palm Beach Gardens. BioCatalyst International, a firm originally from Virginia and founded by a co-founder of Genzyme (GENZ), moved its office headquarters to West Palm Beach, where it provides financing capital and business management for biotech firms. As if that's not enough, Alexandria Real Estate Equities, Inc., owns and manages a 46,000 sq. ft. innovation center in Palm Beach, where it leases state-of-the-art wet labs with shared office and administrative services.

Palm Beach is already home to some of the world's leading biotech industry researchers, including Herbert Weissbach, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor and Director of the Center for Molecular Biology and Biotechnology, Charles E. Schmidt College of Science; Keith Brew, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor and Schmidt Senior Fellow, Charles E. Schmidt College of Biomedical Science; Claes Wahlestedt, M.D., Ph.D., Professor of Biomedical Sciences and Director of Pharmagenomics at Scripps Florida; and Roy A. Periana, Ph.D., Professor of Chemistry at Scripps Florida.

The biotech industry and the concurrent growth of biotech jobs in Palm Beach were supported by the Workforce Alliance's Biotechnology Training Grant, which was funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's High Growth Job Training Initiative beginning in 2004 for a three-year period that expired at the end of 2007. Kathryn Schmidt, President and Chief Executive Officer of Workforce Alliance, said, "As we sought this unsolicited grant almost four years ago, our objective was to develop a highly skilled workforce to support an expected influx of biotechnology and life sciences companies into our region. It has proven to be excellent foresight. The three-



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year program gave the region a head start in the search for skilled talent by the biotechnology and life sciences-related companies as they considered establishing themselves in our region.”

Palm Beach, Florida, has the mixture of all the right qualities and conditions to make it a new hub for the biotech industry and a creator of biotech jobs now and into the future.

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