

2014 BIOTECH DIRECTORY

'INDUSTRIAL FELLOWSHIP' DRAWS EDUCATORS TO N.C.

By **MATT EVANS** THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

While Forsyth Tech, Alamance Community College and Rowan-Cabarrus Community College collaborate on the c3bc bioscience credential project (see related story, page 3), they're also sharing North Carolina's acknowledged prowess in biotechnology with teachers from around the country.

The National Center for the Biotechnology Workforce based at Forsyth Tech will work with its community college partners and several Triad and North Carolina biotech companies to host a dozen teachers during each of the next two summers. The Bioscience Industrial Fellowship Project is funded by a \$548,000 grant from the National Science Foundation.

While in the Triad, those teachers — who may teach any subject at either the high school

or college level — will visit companies such as Transtech Pharma and Banner Life Sciences in High Point, Targacept and Tengion in Winston-Salem, and the Joint School of Nanoscience and Nanoengineering in Greensboro, among many other educational and commercial institutions in the state.

Russ Read, the executive director of the National Center, says the mission of the fellows will be to translate the information and experiences they glean from those visits into classroom instruction they and

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executive director,
National Center for the
Biotechnology Workforce

others can use.

"Say a math teacher comes, and we go over to TransTech and see how important the calibration of equipment is to them," Read says. That teacher will work with others in the program on ways to integrate that information in their classes, "and they'll be able to say 'I've seen this happen, and I know how it works.'"

The point, of course, is to encourage students with a variety of interests and backgrounds in a career in biosciences.

The fellows will surely include several from North Carolina, but

it's a tribute to the regional and state biotech industry that teachers from further afield will come here to learn too, Read says.

The companies and organizations involved in the program are excited too, he says, even though it's possible that many of the students who ultimately benefit from the teachers' experiences will be in far-flung parts of the country, possibly beyond their usual recruiting range.

"But you never know where students will end up," Read notes. Biotech executives know their industry is growing and will need workers with good skills everywhere.

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the instructors staffing the lab. "That would allow students to work more independently" and increase the student capacity of the facility.

The Department of Labor grant is paying to run the lab and also to renovate a larger space on campus to use as well starting next year. Ayers said it hasn't yet been determined if that new space will replace or be in addition to the existing skills lab.

Long-term challenges

It's a great idea — but also a tough one to pull off long-term, said Bill Woodruff at Alamance Community College, who has been teaching biotechnology for 27 years. During the online era he's tried various approaches to combining distance and hands-on training, such as holding Saturday labs for students who got their lectures online.

That's obviously not as flexible as an extended-hours, freely

accessible lab. But it was also a lot cheaper.

"It's very difficult to fund a lab that's going to be open 12 to 15 hours a day, not knowing when students will be there," Woodruff says. The grant money won't last forever, but "I hope they can pull it off, because I'd really like to see a model like that work."

Besides planning for sustainability, there's still plenty of other work for the c3bc consortium to do during the next couple of years, Read says, some of which will be mapped out at the meeting taking place in Winston-Salem. Among the tasks will be to upload all the new content being created to the website of the National Training & Education Resource, or NTER, where other schools will be able to access it.

"The whole plan for everything we're doing is to make it shareable and open source," Read says.

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