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OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

news

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GOV. BLAGOJEVICH ANNOUNCES \$125,000 IN TRAINING GRANTS TO ADVANCE THE SKILLS OF WORKERS IN EMERGING LIFE SCIENCE INDUSTRY ACROSS THE CHICAGOLAND REGION

CHICAGO – Continuing to support the state’s growing bioscience sector, Gov. Rod R. Blagojevich today announced \$125,000 in grants to help companies in this vital industry become more competitive by upgrading the skills of their workforce. Chicago-based Chromatin Inc., Fernalogic Inc., the Chicago Technology Park (CTP), and Munin Corporation in Oak Park, are receiving grants from the Biotech Training Investment Program (bio-TIP), an innovative, new workforce training program, which will allow them to train 27 employees and students. This funding comes as a part of *Opportunity Returns*, the Governor’s pro-active, comprehensive economic development strategy designed to spur even more economic growth and create more jobs throughout the region.

“Illinois is a national leader in the life sciences industry, and for us to continue to advance our position, we must make sure we have a ready and capable workforce equipped with the necessary technical skills. By targeting these workforce training grants within this critical sector, we are helping bioscience companies become more competitive and creating more high-paying, high-tech Illinois jobs,” Gov. Blagojevich said.

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) is administering bio-TIP, which is modeled after the successful Employer Training Investment Program (ETIP). Over the last four years, Gov. Blagojevich has invested \$69.5 million in ETIP to advance the skills of more than 304,000 Illinois workers at almost 6,000 companies. bio-TIP is designed to serve existing bioscience businesses in the state, and those who are engaging in planned permanent expansion or retention activities. The program also helps companies recruit graduate students who are seeking industry experience and employment. Through bio-TIP, companies and organizations are eligible for up to 50 percent of the costs of training their full-time and/or part-time employees.

The **Chicago Technology Park (CTP)** is receiving a \$100,000 grant to continue developing the BiTmaP Program, a Bio-Informatics training curriculum. The BiTmaP Program is supported by a \$6 million dollar investment from the U.S. Department of Labor, Illinois Medical District, UIC and other local partners. Grant funding will be used to supplement employers’ contributions and provide 20 students with focused work/training experience of 480 hours. To date, the program has enrolled 160 students with 47 graduates.

Chromatin Inc., which specializes in patented mini-chromosome technologies that enable the development of new seed products and the delivery of multiple genetic traits, is receiving a \$20,000 grant to train four employees in the areas of database and project management training, molecular biology and plant biotechnology. **Fernalogic, Inc.** specializes in pharmaceuticals that are produced by fermentation,

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encompassing a large range of products from antibiotics to anticancer agents, immunosuppressant and many other types of natural products. The company is receiving a \$10,000 grant to train two employees in the areas of information technology and electronic media. **Munin Corporation**, an Oak Park-based developer of novel healthcare related biological agents for use in the treatment of cancerous tumors, is receiving a \$5,000 grant to train one employee in biotechnology research and development.

Illinois is already home to nearly 60,000 employees at more than 1,100 biotech firms and was rated the top state in the nation for biotech growth in 2005 by *Business Facilities Magazine*. Illinois' strengths are highlighted through unmatched university and research institutions, a world-class infrastructure, a diversified workforce, aggressive government support and its innovative Illinois companies. Multi-billion dollar Illinois medical companies, including Abbott, Baxter Labs and Dade-Behring, are giants who are setting industry standards for excellence in the biotech field. World-class universities and research institutions include: the University of Chicago, Northwestern University, Argonne National Laboratory, Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Institute for Genomic Biology, the National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research, University Technology Park at Illinois Institute of Technology and the Illinois Medical District.

Gov. Blagojevich and Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley recently celebrated that BIO 2010, the world's most prestigious international life sciences conference, is coming back to Chicago after its tremendously successful conference last year. BIO 2006 was a unique opportunity for Illinois to showcase its growing biotech business to the almost 20,000 people who attended from across the U.S. and 62 countries. Nearly one-third of the attendees were international participants. The annual BIO convention is the industry's largest gathering of researchers, major international and domestic biotech corporations, start-ups, regulators and investors. The Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau estimated that BIO 2006 had a direct economic impact of almost \$28 million. BIO 2010 will be held at McCormick Place from May 2-5, 2010. The Governor is also providing \$1 million to bring BIO 2010 back to Chicago.

“Over the last several years, Gov. Blagojevich has helped build tremendous momentum throughout our biotech industry, and these workforce training grants are another way we are stepping up to help this vital sector grow and thrive. By enhancing the skills of our workforce and supporting the assets that are the most desirable to growing bioscience businesses, we will help increase productivity, reduce costs and enhance competitiveness in today's ultra-competitive, global economy,” DCEO Director Jack Lavin said.

Since January 2004, Illinois has gained more than 186,000 jobs, which is best in the Midwest. Illinois led the nation in new job growth in January with 19,100 new jobs and in June of this year with 12,400 new jobs. In 2006, Illinois gained 71,000 new jobs, which is the best calendar year gain since 2000. Over the last 4 years, from January 2003 to December 2006, Illinois had the second largest unemployment rate drop in the nation. The federal Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Illinois Department of Employment Security compiled these statistics.

For more information about bio-TIP, please contact Cesar Lopez, 312/814.2700 or Cesar.Lopez@illinois.gov.

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