

# ROWAN-CABARRUS COMMUNITY COLLEGE OFFERS BIOTECH TRAINING CLOSE TO HOME

As the region's employment base has shifted from traditional manufacturing to technology with the advent of the NC Research Campus and the arrival of many companies in the biotechnology industry, Rowan-Cabarrus Community College has responded by developing a number of new programs and resources to help local workers remain competitive in a rapidly evolving job market.

## BIOTECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

RCCC recently gained approval from the North Carolina Community College System and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) to offer associate degrees in biotechnology and agricultural biotechnology starting in the fall 2009 semester. The biotechnology program will prepare students for careers as lab technicians, research assistants and quality control assistants, while the agricultural biotechnology degree will help to meet the growing demand for skilled lab technicians in biological, chemical and agricultural technology.

In addition, RCCC includes a biotechnology concentration as part of their associate degree program in industrial engineering technology that prepares graduates for jobs in specialized biomanufacturing and facilities management.

Starting in 2009, RCCC will also offer a short-term course called "Overview of Clinical Research." Designed as an efficient training program, the curriculum covers topics basic to the clinical trial process such as protocol, informed consent, site selection and documentation. Furthermore, RCCC is working with Gaston College to create a clinical research certificate program targeted to individuals with prior science or laboratory backgrounds.

Many of these new biotech-focused programs will soon be housed in a new 60,000-square-foot building on the NCRC. This \$44-million, state-of-the-art facility will include 11 science and computer laboratories, a bioprocessing laboratory, multiple classrooms with a complete array of technology, distance learning classrooms and a library, all designed to give students hands-on training in biotechnology.

Expected to open in fall 2010, this facility and the additional instructional space it provides will also allow RCCC to increase the scope of its biotechnology program offerings.

## WORKFORCE REDEVELOPMENT

RCCC also offers employer-specific career education through its Customized Training Program. Designed to react quickly to the needs of businesses while protecting their proprietary processes, the program offers customized training for full-time employees of qualifying companies in various industries including life sciences.

These programs have proven to be highly effective tools for recruiting businesses to Cabarrus County. For example, when Orlando-based Connexions was evaluating locations for a new call center operation, the county's economic development officials referred them to RCCC. The availability of training programs tailored to prepare local workers to fill the hundreds of jobs that this call center would create was one of the key factors that ultimately brought the company to Cabarrus County.

## A CRITICAL LINK TO THE CAREERS OF THE FUTURE

Because RCCC offers easily accessible, specialized training tailored for high-tech industries, it will undoubtedly continue to play a major role in fulfilling the need for locally available lifelong learning opportunities. As the Education and Workforce Development Action Plan comes to fruition, look to RCCC to continue providing critical support to the biotechnology industry as these programs help prepare the local workforce for the knowledge- and technology-based jobs that are the key to the future economic development of the region.