

City, BioTechnical Institute to grow workers



(George Hagegeorge/For the Baltimore Examiner)

Kathleen Weiss, director of the BioTechnical Institute at its lab on the Baltimore City Community College campus on Monday.

Dave Carey, The Examiner
Feb 20, 2007 3:00 AM (14 days ago)

BALTIMORE -

The [BioTechnical Institute of Maryland Inc.](#) will make sure that its gift keeps giving. Last week, the Baltimore City Board of Estimates awarded a \$250,000 economic development grant for the BioTechnical Institute to provide free training for unskilled high school graduates to qualify them for jobs in the biotech industry.

“One of our top priorities at the GBC is to nurture the biosciences business in the region,” said Donald C. Fry, president and chief executive officer of the Greater Baltimore Committee.

Founded in 1998 by Johns Hopkins geneticist Margaret B. Penno, BTI typically enrolled 25 students into its nine-week laboratory

training program. With the help of the grant, BTI can continue to offer a three-month, 16-hour a week, [pre-training program](#) to prepare students before they enroll in the main class. Following successful completion of the program, students enter into a 80-hour to 100-hour internship with a local biotech firm, such as Osiris Therapeutics or Chesapeake Biological Laboratories.

With the grant, BTI will be able to expand class sizes to 36 students and continue to fund lab exercises. The cost of putting a student through the six-month course is \$9,000.

Funding for the company comes mainly through grants and donations, so receiving the large award from the Board of Estimates was important for BTI. The group also tries to support itself through the implementation of training workshops for local biotech employees.

“This funding is critical to our being able to not only continue the lab courses,” said Kathleen Weiss, the executive director of BTI, “But expanding the seminars as well.”

To date, BTI has 176 students who have earned certificates as lab technicians, with 80 percent of them receiving placement in a biotech job within four months.

More information

» To find out about enrolling in classes, call 410-752-4224.

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