

The Herald-Mail

<http://www.herald-mail.com/>

08/13/2009

## HCC gets \$672K grant for biotech programs

**It will be used to purchase biotech equipment, fund advising and support for high school students in the biotech pathway**

**By HEATHER KEELS**  
**heather.keels@herald-mail.com**



Dr. Melanie Ulrich announced today that Hagerstown Community College has been awarded a \$672,696 grant from the National Science Foundation to be used to accelerate the development of a biotechnology or biomanufacturing in the regional workforce. **(Credit: Yvette May / Staff Photographer)**

HAGERSTOWN — Hagerstown Community College officials announced Thursday that the college has been awarded a \$672,696 grant from the National Science Foundation to further develop biotechnology programs on both the high school and college levels.

“This is the first time in the history of the college that we have received funding from the National Science Foundation,” said Melanie Ulrich, HCC’s Biotechnology Program Coordinator.

HCC President Guy Altieri said grants from the NSF are extremely competitive, and, until recently, were awarded primarily to top-tier universities.

The funding will be used to build upon the biotechnology educational pathway the college has established over the past few years in cooperation with Washington County Public

Schools, Ulrich said.

It will be used to purchase biotech equipment, fund advising and support for high school students in the biotech pathway, and to continue summer programs for both high school students and high school teachers, she said.

The equipment purchased will go to high school labs, HCC’s biotech education lab and on-campus internship sites, Ulrich said. The new equipment, such as a thermal cycler that can perform real-time polymerase chain reactions, will keep students on the cutting edge of the biotech field, she said.

The advising funded by the grant will identify students with an interest in or a talent for biotechnology, help those students take the appropriate high school classes, and connect them with summer programs and internship opportunities, Ulrich said.

Finally, the grant will allow the college to continue offering summer biotechnology institutes for teachers and high school students that were started this summer. The teacher institute gives high school teachers free training in biotechnology curriculum while providing a daily stipend, and the student institute, also tuition-free, includes introductory courses, hands-on lab experience, field trips to research labs and visits from guest speakers, Ulrich said.

HCC officials also announced a new internship program that will allow students to conduct research for the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) at a lab on the HCC

campus.

That program, called InnovaBio-MD, was modeled after a similar program at Salt Lake Community College in Salt Lake City, Utah, Ulrich said. It is open to qualified county high school students, HCC students and Frostburg State University students.

The first InnovaBio-MD group will start Aug. 28 and run through November, said InnovaBio-MD director Ricky Ulrich, a PhD-level research scientist with USAMRIID's bacteriology department at Fort Detrick. He is married to Melanie Ulrich.

One of the projects the first group will take on involves testing thousands of potential drug compounds for their effectiveness against bacteria that cause diseases like cystic fibrosis and tuberculosis, Ricky Ulrich said.

The opportunity to do this work on the HCC campus will open doors for students who don't have the time or transportation to commute to internships in Frederick, Melanie Ulrich said. It also gives companies an opportunity to contract out development of projects that are not critical to their mission, she said.

Funding for the InnovaBio-MD program comes from a combination of a Peer Mentoring grant from the U.S. Department of Education, a Base Realignment and Closure grant from the Maryland State Department of Education and the college's own funding, Melanie Ulrich said.

Since offering its first biotechnology classes in fall 2007, HCC has awarded three certificates and two associate of applied science degrees in biotechnology, said Judith Peisen, chair of HCC's mathematics and science division. The college also offers an associate of science and associate of applied science combination for students who wish to double-major in biology and biotechnology, Piesen said.

More than 50 students are in various stages of the biotechnology educational pathway on the HCC campus, HCC spokeswoman Elizabeth K. Stull said.

---

#### Reader Comments:

Please note: The Herald-Mail does not review every comment posted by our visitors, and we are not responsible for the content of the messages. The postings are the sole responsibility of the poster. We reserve the right to review, edit and/or delete any message for any reason, including but not limited to postings that are commercial in nature, contain profanity, off-topic or offensive. We reserve the right to revoke the posting privileges of any person who violates these rules at any time.

<p>From: <b>digger</b></p> <p>Fri 14 Aug 2009 03:00:45 AM EDT</p>	<p>To the Herald-Mail: This story reports on the benefits of the grant, but does not report on the opportunity cost. That is, what did each U.S. citizen *give up* in order to bring this benefit to HCC? What other things could we have bought, had we not financed this? Could every family in America have bought 1/2 head of lettuce, or a 12 oz. bottle of water? Will this expenditure increase our taxes and/or the national debt, and if so, when? Please help us to put these opportunity costs into perspective against the benefits, so we can make informed decisions in the voting booth.</p>
<p>From: <b>Eric-Cartman</b></p> <p>Fri 14 Aug 2009 02:44:23 PM EDT</p>	<p>Once again HCC bilking for all it can. Talk about a racket.</p>
<p>From: <b>visionforhager</b></p> <p>Fri 14 Aug 2009</p>	<p>to the above authors (digger and Eric-C): PLEASE READ THE ARTICLE closer. This is the first time the National Science Foundation has made an award to Washington County. The president of HCC indicated that this is a competitive grant. Would you rather HCC just request the money from the county government? Let's commend those involved for bringing in additional resources needed to</p>

03:00:05 PM EDT

bring these innovative programs...Congrats to HCC and the school system for investing in this economic development project!

Copyright The Herald-Mail