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Dallas College Lands Historic Federal Grant to Grow Biotech Workforce in North Texas

$8.8 million grant names Dallas College as leader of workforce development program that unites region to meet specific industry need

DALLAS – August 3, 2022 – Dallas College today was awarded a groundbreaking U.S. Economic Development Administration grant to help underserved communities access living-wage jobs in biotechnology, a sector that is poised to grow exponentially with the need for additional highly skilled employees in North Texas, according to the latest labor market intelligence.

With approximately $8.8 million in funds allocated to growing the region's future biotech workforce, the new grant will help put North Texas in the company of other major biotech hubs such as the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill "triangle," already home to a thriving life sciences industry along the nation's eastern corridor.

Under terms of the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant, Dallas College and partner institutions Collin College, Tarrant County College and University of Texas at Arlington will use the funding to create a regional career pathway model in three areas, biotechnology, biomanufacturing and bioinformatics, while generating new market employment and educational opportunities with the help of an employer-led biotechnology advisory council.

"Dallas College is proud to take the lead role in this new federally funded initiative to help move underemployed and unrepresented populations into living wage jobs and grow the region's biotech workforce," said Dallas College Chancellor Justin Lonon. "The years of behind-the-scenes work that went into aligning the different partners and interests needed to secure this level of federal investment, from industry to our peers in higher ed, is something that deserves special recognition for the surrounding diverse communities we serve."

Grant represents concerted approach by region's employers to meet future jobs need

With Dallas College serving as the "backbone" organization for this grant, employers already onboard include Children's Health Medical Center, McKesson, Medical City-HCA Healthcare, Tenet Health, Texas Health Resources, Evolve Biologics, and UT Southwestern Medical Center. Together, these seven major healthcare employers have committed to hiring a combined total of 1,100 entry-level biotech workers, providing above-living wages of at least $15 an hour and as well as healthcare, retirement, and benefits that come with positions such as Clinical Lab Techs and Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Operators, among others.

The initiative, dubbed "Grow the Biotech Workforce in North Texas to Meet Emerging Skill Needs via a Collaborative Partnership," will also identify additional employer partners in healthcare and IT, with the help of the DFW Hospital Council, Bio North Texas (BioNTX) and the Dallas Regional Chamber, while networking through Dallas College's nonprofit employer outreach programs and partnering with economic development corporations throughout North Texas.

This work helps to advance the burgeoning North Texas life science ecosystem alongside several major workforce and innovation initiatives, including the development of Pegasus Park, which serves as the hub for much of the life science activity occurring in the region. Pegasus Park, which in partnership with Lyda Hill Philanthropies, has funded the repurposing of a 25-acre, six-building campus and strategically located near Dallas Design and Southwestern Medical Districts into a center for business, social impact, and biomedical innovation exemplifying the spirit that has made Dallas one of the nation's most dynamic cities. The park aims to boost local biotech, nonprofit, and corporate innovation, with participation from key partners like Dallas College, thanks to this new grant.

Tom Luce, CEO of Biotech Initiatives at Lyda Hill Philanthropies, emphasized that "this grant is a gamechanger for our region's bio life sciences workforce and for students who will soon have stronger and more direct pathways into high-paying jobs with opportunities for career growth. Of all jobs in Dallas, only 40% are currently considered 'good jobs.' Thanks to this grant, that share will increase and thereby help to strengthen our healthcare institutions and our region's economic vitality."

"Over the next three years, Dallas Fort-Worth is projected to add over 200,000 jobs," according to Ben Magill, associate vice chancellor of economic opportunity, workforce and advancement at Dallas College. "And this award will help us establish the critical economic and workforce development infrastructure needed to fill those jobs, increase economic mobility for underserved communities and create additional jobs. This award will be a catalyst. Healthcare and healthcare support occupations are expected to be the fastest growing industry sector among those jobs, expanding by about 8 percent or more in the next few years," said Magill, who also founded Dallas College's Labor Market Intelligence Center and was the architect of Dallas College's successful EDA application.

Dallas College's efforts to unify the region's economic partners recognized

As part of the grant in the first year, Dallas College will develop a regional analysis of existing education gaps and identify future opportunities for curriculum and program design, and provide outreach to recruit historically underserved populations, implement training programs created by the biotechnology advisory council, and provide wrap-around services to training participants to ensure successful program completion.

While Dallas College serves as the program lead, Collin College, the University of Texas at Arlington, and Tarrant County College will also offer an introductory "boot camp" to train 800 participants for entry-level biotechnology jobs, while building a career pathway model in biotechnology across all education levels to provide future career growth opportunities.

The following partners provided their support and backing which was crucial to the success of the application: Workforce Solutions for Greater Dallas, Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas, and Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County, the Cities of Arlington, Dallas, Farmers Branch, Fort Worth and Lancaster, the Dallas Independent School District, the Dallas Regional Chamber, Garland Chamber of Commerce, North Texas Commission, and United Way of Metropolitan Dallas, the Commit Partnership, Communities Foundation of Texas, Educate Texas, Last Mile Education

Fund, Lyda Hill Philanthropies, and Tech Titans, the National Center for Therapeutics Manufacturing, and the University of Texas at Dallas.

"A trained workforce is essential to ensuring that the United States can compete and succeed in the 21st century," said Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo of today's awards. "Making once-in-a-generation investments in industry-driven, and locally-led workforce systems will create high-quality jobs and accelerate regional economic growth, especially for underserved communities."

"The culmination of this grant award is the result of working closely with our partners to determine their needs, and positioning Dallas College as an enabler of resources to produce even better jobs, all for the sake of our students, our future," Dr. Lonon added. "Biotech is a sure bet and Dallas-Fort Worth is poised to grow the sector like no other region can."

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About Dallas College
Dallas College, formerly the Dallas County Community College District, was founded in 1965, and consists of seven campuses: Brookhaven, Cedar Valley, Eastfield, El Centro, Mountain View, North Lake and Richland. Dallas College offers online learning and serves more than 125,000 credit and continuing education students annually. Dallas College also offers dual credit for students in partner high schools and early college high schools throughout Dallas County. Students benefit from partnerships with local business leaders, school districts and four-year universities, and Dallas College offers associate degree and career/technical certificate programs in more than 100 areas of study, as well as a bachelor's degree in education. Based on annual enrollment, it is the largest community college in Texas.

About Pegasus Park
Pegasus Park is a 25-acre mixed-use office campus consisting of more than 750,000 square feet of office and amenities space across multiple buildings, including an 18-story office tower. The campus features three anchors of activity: the Tower, featuring a social impact hub, UT Southwestern's Office for Technology Development, accelerator programs, and corporate and academic innovation teams; biotechnology and life sciences coworking laboratory and office space; and amenities, including a conference center, entertainment/dining venues, gym, and greenspace. Strategically located between the Dallas Design District and the Southwestern Medical District in Dallas, the Pegasus Park campus is positioned to be a premier hub of innovation and the epicenter for regional life science innovation to prevent, detect, and treat diseases and promote health and wellbeing.