Bio-Bench Project

**Grant Recipient:** St. Louis Community College (STLCC), Florissant Valley campus  
**Grantor:** National Science Foundation, Advanced Technological Education (ATE)  
**Project Period:** July 15, 2008, through June 30, 2011  
**Project Purpose:** To expand educational programming and internships in the life sciences  
**Award Amount:** $679,487

This ATE program grant has helped STLCC establish its Center for Plant and Life Sciences at the new Bio-Research and Development Growth (BRDG) Park, an off-campus post-incubator facility touting much-needed lab space for upper-level biotechnology classes. Also open is STLCC's Contract Research Organization (CRO)—through which companies can contract work that students perform, to include procedures such as capillary electrophoresis, cell culture work, RNA interference, quantitative PCR, and colony work. Through the CRO, students are completing internships paid for by the grant. “By establishing a training program, biotechnology students get real-world, hands-on training,” says project director Richard Norris, Ph.D. “At the same time, if companies are aware of workforce availability, they have an incentive to stay here and grow.” In addition, the project offers summer workshops to teachers, plus summer camps to middle and high school students.

**Program Notables**

- **10,500** square feet of space is now open, including three labs: one for tissue culture; one for molecular biology; one for bio-manufacturing.
- When complete, BRDG Park will grow to **500,000** square feet of research wet-lab and office space.
- **30 teachers** completed week-long summer 2008 and 2009 training workshops and each received **$500** stipend and **$500** in related equipment and supplies for their classrooms.
- **15 high school students** and **18 middle school students** completed the first summer camp in June 2009.
- **$106,000** in new equipment has been purchased through the grant to support the CRO.
- **75 STLCC students** are enrolled in the spring 2010 semester.

**Student Testimonials**

“My goal after receiving the certificate of specialization in biotechnology is to reenter the biotechnology field as a laboratory researcher/technician after a 13-year absence.”

“I am excited and honored to be given the opportunity to work and study alongside and in the presence of some of the greatest in the field at BRDG Park. The new facilities are amazing. I was pleasantly surprised to see such an upgraded lab on the Florissant Valley campus last semester, but BRDG Park takes the cake. I am as proud as ever to say that I attend a community college, and I would challenge anyone to show me an institution in the tri-state area with better facilities and opportunities.”

“Already having a bachelor's degree in computer science and IT industry experience…armed with my new associate degree, I'm confident I will be able to work in the metro area as a biotech lab technician, gaining lab experience while continuing to study upper-level undergraduate coursework.”

“I chose this program because after graduating from the chemical technology program and working in industry for two years, I see an importance in broadening my laboratory skills to open more job opportunities.”