

Partnerships, new leadership move state toward bio goals

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According to Arizona's Bioscience Roadmap, commissioned and coordinated by The Flinn Foundation, the state needs to focus on four strategies for a strong bioscience hub. Here are those strategies and how Arizona fared in the first two quarters of 2009.

Build Research Infrastructure

- The Translational Genomics Research Institute (TGen) announced a strategic alliance with the Van Andel Research Institute (VARI) of Grand Rapids, Mich. TGen's president and scientific director, Jeffrey Trent, will also serve as VARI's president and research director.
- The Tucson-based Critical Path Institute announced that it is forming United States Diagnostics Standards, an organization to assess the performance of diagnostic tools before they are submitted to the US Food and Drug Administration for evaluation.
- The Biodesign Institute at Arizona State University welcomed two leaders: Alan Nelson, a prominent expert in technology commercialization, is Biodesign's new director; Joshua LaBaer, a pioneer in the field of proteomics, will head a sophisticated personalized-diagnostics laboratory.
- Fernando Martinez, an internationally recognized expert on childhood asthma, was named interim director of the BIO5 Institute at the University of Arizona.
- Phoenix Children's Hospital launched its Children's Neuroscience Institute under the leadership of an elite pediatric neurosurgeon, the newly recruited P. David Adelson, who oversees 40 researchers and caregivers, as well as a \$14 million clinical trial funded by the National Institutes of Health.
- Karen Weihs, a researcher at the Arizona Cancer Center at UA, was awarded a \$3.7 million grant to study the genetic, psychological, and social contributors to depression among breast-cancer patients.
- The Arizona Cancer Center, Science Foundation Arizona, and Raytheon Co. united on a \$1.2 million project to apply Raytheon's sophisticated image-analysis technology to the detection of melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer.
- Barrow Neurological Institute and ASU celebrated the opening of the BNI-ASU Center for Preclinical Imaging, which includes a 7-Tesla MRI scanner for high-resolution visualization of anatomy, brain function, and disease progression.
- The Arizona Biomedical Research Commission initiated development of a web-based virtual tissue bank that will provide Arizona researchers virtual access to tissue samples collected statewide; researchers will then be able to order samples that match their research needs.

Build Critical Mass of Firms

- Covance Inc., one of the world's largest contract-research organizations, opened a \$175 million drug-development laboratory in Chandler. The facility may ultimately provide 2,000 high-wage jobs.
- Banner Health and the University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center announced plans to create the M. D. Anderson Banner Cancer Center in Gilbert, on the campus of Banner Gateway Medical Center. The \$90 million facility will open late in 2011.
- Catapult Bio, a nonprofit organization that will help usher commercially promising discoveries from Arizona laboratories to the marketplace, was launched by two technology-commercialization experts previously at TGen. Assisting in Catapult's startup is a grant from Abraxis BioScience of up to \$14 million over five years.
- Nutri-Health Supplements LLC, a Cottonwood-based maker of dietary supplements, was

purchased by Canadian firm Atrium Innovations Inc. for \$23.9 million. Atrium pledged to keep NHS' operations and staff intact in Arizona.

- UA announced the formation of two bioscience companies based on UA research: Cancer Prevention Therapeutics, which will bring to market a drug combination to prevent development of colon cancer, and Luceome Biotechnologies LLC, which uses luminescence detection to identify target and off-target effects of drug candidates.
- TGen spinoff MedTrust Online LLC, which provides data and expert advice to help oncologists make clinical treatment decisions, announced strategic partnerships to support oncologists at Scottsdale Clinical Research Institute, a unit of Scottsdale Healthcare, and South Texas Oncology and Hematology.

Enhance Business Environment

- Salutaris Medical Devices Inc. (SalutarisMD), a medical-devices firm, received \$1.5 million in financing from Arizona venture-capital firm Translational Accelerator LLC (TRAC). TRAC is Arizona's first venture fund established to target early-stage bioscience companies operating in Arizona or planning to move to the state.
- An economic-impact study of Arizona's bioscience sector by Battelle Technology Partnership Practice found that the biosciences accounted for \$12.5 billion in revenues in 2007 and more than 87,400 jobs.
- ASU and the University of Pennsylvania entered into a formal partnership to commercialize select technologies, while UA established a technology-commercialization relationship with the University Funds, a seed-stage venture-development firm based in Bellevue, Wash.
- Catapult Bio and the City of Surprise signed a strategic-partnership agreement, under which Catapult will assist Surprise as it launches an incubator for bioscience firms.

Prepare Workers, Educate Citizens

- Northern Arizona University and Mesa Community College announced a formal articulation agreement by which students will be able to earn a cost-efficient undergraduate degree in biotechnology, completing 75 credit hours at MCC, then transferring those credits to NAU toward a bachelor of science in biology with a certificate in biotechnology.
- A nonpartisan business-education-philanthropic coalition launched "Expect More Arizona," a \$2 million public-awareness campaign to encourage greater citizen involvement in education.
- Four Arizona undergraduates in bioscience-related fields--three at ASU and one at UA--were named winners of the Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship. The federally endowed award is the highest undergraduate prize in science, mathematics, and engineering, awarded annually to fewer than 300 students nationwide.
- Research Corporation for Science Advancement announced \$120,000 in grants to improve science education in Arizona. The program creates individual partnerships between eight UA researchers and eight local high-school science teachers.
- The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation awarded a \$40,000 grant to broaden the Professional Science Master's degree programs at Arizona's three public universities. PSMs are critical elements in the STEM (science, technology, mathematics, and engineering) education infrastructure, designed to meet growing industry needs for applied scientists, engineers, and mathematicians and to provide rewarding careers for undergraduate science and math majors.