WE HAVE A MUCH HIGHER RETENTION RATE WITH ACC STUDENTS. THEY KNOW WHAT THEY’RE GETTING INTO AND THEY COME BETTER PREPARED.”

Josh Combs, Ph.D, Vice President Manufacturing, XBiotech
Austin Community College’s Biotechnology Program Prepares Job-Ready Students for Industry Careers

Austin Community College (ACC) developed its Biotechnology Program to help fill a need for jobs in the bioscience and biotechnology workplace. As part of the Community College Consortium for Bioscience Credentials (c3bc), ACC offers a 2-year program with 16-week courses in which students come out with an Advanced Technician Certificate, an associate’s degree, or a Biotechnology Certificate. A key asset to this program is the required internship, which students take at the end of their first year. The required internship has proven to be extremely valuable to local companies, where many hire ACC students straight out of the internship. ACC has developed relationships with 10-15 companies, including XBiotech and Bioo Scientific.

ACC had 100+ students and alumni enrolled in their Biotechnology Program in 2015, and 170 total graduates from the program since its start. “We try to make our students ahead of the curve to make them more marketable for biomanufacturing,” said Linnea Fletcher Ph.D, Department Chair, Biotechnology, Executive Director, AC2 Bio-Link Regional Center, Austin Community College.

XBIOTECH HIRES ACC STUDENTS DIRECTLY OUT OF INTERNSHIPS

XBiotech, a bioscience company founded in 2008, started taking interns from ACC’s Biotechnology Program in 2012. Since then, XBiotech has hired 10 ACC students and have had little to no turnover from these new hires. XBiotech began their relationship with ACC when they hired their first ACC student, Heather. “She turned out to be really great. She picked up everything really quickly and had such a can-do attitude. Once we saw what Heather could do, we knew that ACC was a great place to start,” said Sushma Shivaswamy, Ph.D, vice president of Research and Development, XBiotech. The company is able to begin training while students undergo the 3-month internship.

XBiotech gives tours, workshops, and works with the ACC professors directly to engage themselves in the program to find the best candidates for the job. XBiotech sees the ACC internship requirement as a huge benefit as they see it as a trial period for potential new hires. “When we get interns, we can see value in them before hiring them full time,” Shivaswamy said.

“The interns are essentially vetted for us. The program does a good job of weeding out students they don’t feel would be good for employers,” Josh Combs, Ph.D, Vice President Manufacturing, XBiotech.

XBiotech also gets customized training out of their partnership with ACC. ACC will tailor the curriculum for what the company needs, all while considering what the industry as a whole needs and what will benefit other companies.

XBiotech is a growing company and expanding to a new facility. Most of the new hires they will bring into this new facility will be from ACC.

“Students from ACC want to grow their career. We saw benefit in it, and we ran with it.”

Josh Combs, Ph.D, Vice President Manufacturing, XBiotech
Bioo Scientific, a local biotechnology company, finds great benefit in the “try it before you buy it” value of the ACC internship requirement. Two Bioo Scientific employees have taught in the ACC program and therefore understand its value. With a total of close to 100 employees, Bioo Scientific has hired 20 ACC students in the past year and a half.

“ACC does a good job of doing hands-on training for what the industry needs, so that’s really helpful! You pretty much know that they have the skill set and are ready for the job,” said Sandesh Subramanya, Ph.D, Director of Vaccines & Diagnostics, Bioo Scientific. “The interns we have just hired show a lot of potential.” Bioo Scientific estimates 75-80% of ACC students end up being offered a full time position.

Bioo Scientific also benefits from ACC’s curriculum flexibility. “Since our needs have evolved, it’s nice that ACC is receptive to the idea of specific courses that address our needs,” said Marianna Goldrick, Ph.D, senior scientist R&D, Bioo Scientific.

Bioo Scientific believes ACC students have a shorter on-the-job training time because of the background they have from the Biotechnology Program.

Bio Scientific has hired students that want more training and have gone back to ACC to take additional courses to increase their knowledge and skill set. The company has seen strong retention with ACC students, with some being there for 8 or 9 years. “They have to show up, pay attention to detail, and be team players. We’ve found some great people from ACC,” Goldrick said.
SERVING STARTUPS

Austin Community College benefits startup biotech companies through the creation of its Bioscience Incubator. These small, local companies lease space and hire ACC biotechnology students as interns to provide real-world training and experience. In partnership with the Texas Life-Sciences Collaboration Center, ACC has been able to offer small biomedical companies access to state-of-the-art technology, and as a result, give companies the opportunity to change the industry for the better with new discoveries and industry-wide solutions.

XBIOTECH EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

“I feel like every piece of information I’ve learned there, I use here. I’m glad ACC was there so I could get to this point and wasn’t just stuck. I wouldn’t of wanted it any other way even if I had the funds to go back to school. I got everything I needed there.”

Heather Mays, senior research associate antibody discovery, XBiotech

BIOO SCIENTIFIC EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

“The number one reason Bioo Scientific keeps going back to ACC is practical experience. They have hired people with bachelor degree who have had no hands-on experience, and it’s not the same.”

Craig McCasland, Lab Tech III, Bioo Scientific

About the C3BC:
The Community College Consortium for Bioscience Credentials (C3BC) is a multistate consortium of 12 community colleges engaged in an educational and training initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Labor under grant TC-23761-12-60-A-37. Under the C3BC, 12 Community Colleges nationwide coordinate to support the following strategies to assist grant participants to obtain employment in high-wage, high-skill occupations, such as biotechnology, biomanufacturing, and medical devices:

1. Harmonize a set of core skills across the biosciences and embed stackable and latticed, industry-recognized credentials into training for biosciences jobs that will create career pathways for TAA-eligible and other displaced workers.
2. Improve and expand recruitment, testing and aptitude assessment for trade-impacted workers in tandem with the public workforce system. This will help fill industry demand for biosciences workers.
3. Expand and improve the delivery of education and career training programs at the Community College level. Accelerate completion time in certificate/credentialing programs through improved assessment of prior learning, focused support services, the removal of institutional barriers and development of technology.
4. Build community college capacity for biosciences education and training that meets local, state and national employer needs across subsectors of laboratory skills, biomanufacturing and medical devices.

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