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Boston University School of Medicine

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NEWS

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE ESTABLISHES CITYLAB TO TEACH STUDENTS AND TEACHES ABOUT BIOTECHNOLOGY

Boston, Mass.--Boston University School of Medicine (BUSM) has taken a unique approach to combating the critical shortage of qualified biotechnical personnel. It is the first medical school in the country to establish a permanent biotechnology learning laboratory--called CityLab--that high school teachers can "reserve" for their students. Boston University School of Education is a partner in the program, which is aimed at better educating both teachers and students in the biosciences and encouraging students to pursue careers in bioscience and medicine.

CityLab gives students "hands-on" laboratory experiences that are not presently available in many school systems in the Boston area. CityLab can accommodate 20 students and a high school teacher at any one time. A full-time certified high school science teacher is prepared to oversee and help instruct students and other teachers about biotechnology during each session.

CityLab is striving to include a mix of both suburban and inner city students into the program. Students from the Boston Public Schools, Chelsea and other underserved school systems already are participating in the program.

According to Connie Phillips, the program director of CityLab, many of today's high school systems lack resources and/or skills to introduce their students to the modern world of biology. "Students in many inner city communities are using 1940 lab supplies and 1960 science textbooks," she says.

CityLab will introduce high school science teachers to the most up-to-date information on biotechnology so they in turn can better educate their students about the subject and interest them in pursuing careers in the biomedical

field.

"CityLab was designed to enlighten high school students to the many career opportunities in the biomedical science by allowing them to participate in actual experiments," says Carl Franzblau, Ph.D., an associate dean of medical and dental sciences and the chairman of the Department of Biochemistry at BUSM. A recent report by the Economic Development and Industrial Corporation found that since 1978, less than one percent of high school graduates from Boston have gone into the medical science field (bioscience).

It is estimated by the year 2000, Massachusetts could be the home to 150 biotechnology firms representing \$3 billion in revenue. But both the New England Board of Higher Education and the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council predict that there will be a shortage of qualified scientists especially those at the associate degree and bachelor degree level to fill the needed positions. "We hope that CityLab will enhance recruitment, preparedness and ultimately retention of the students into the biomedical science fields," adds Franzblau.

CityLab is part of BUSM's comprehensive program to educate both high school teachers and students. The School already has trained 60 high school teachers in the fundamentals of biotechnology via its ongoing Summer Institute program. The three-week workshop, which allowed teachers to gain more knowledge and skills applicable for the high school classroom, will be offered again this summer. In addition to the Summer Institute program, BUSM offers LabLink 2000, a year-round in-depth program for teachers, which include both didactic and laboratory experiences for teachers.