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Mass Life Sciences Center Embraces Recommendations to Address Workforce Needs of Life Sciences Sector

Academia, industry and government collaboration key to preparing for growing life sciences workforce in the Commonwealth

September 16, 2008 (Boston, MA)— The Massachusetts Life Sciences Center embraced a study that says Massachusetts must improve, expand and tailor its educational programs and resources designed to prepare students and workers for jobs in life sciences sector, at a board meeting today. The study lays out recommendations to ensure the life sciences industry will have the talent it needs to grow in the Commonwealth over the next decade.

The study, "Growing Talent: Meeting the Evolving Needs of the Massachusetts Life Sciences Industry," co-sponsored by the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center and the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council and conducted by the UMass Donahue Institute, is the product of a year of research and collaboration among the life sciences industry, academia and government.

"Massachusetts' world-class workforce is the number one reason that life sciences companies and research institutions grow or locate in the state," stated Dr. Susan Windham-Bannister, President and CEO of the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center. "The Commonwealth needs to build upon its strengths if it is to remain the world leader in discoveries, patient care, and private sector investment in the life sciences. The Life Sciences Talent Initiative will help guide our strategy for growing and protecting our talented workforce -- the most prized asset of our life sciences super cluster."

The findings emphasize that the Commonwealth must address workforce development in order to maintain its leadership position in the competitive global life sciences industry. The report found, for example, that 85 percent of life sciences employers expect to expand in the next two years, but 90 percent of employers surveyed reported they have difficulty hiring clinical research staff, highlighting the Commonwealth's need to match worker skills and training with available jobs.

The Patrick Administration, in partnership with MBC and the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center, the Massachusetts Biotechnology Education Foundation, MassMEDIC and legislative leaders, have committed to building upon the momentum developed through this initiative to develop a collective strategy that addresses the recommendations in the report. Governor Patrick signed landmark Life Sciences legislation in June, which included support for a \$25 million Massachusetts Life Sciences Investment Fund. The fund provides support for workforce training, along with funding for research grants, fellowships, and other programs designed to support education and research in the life sciences.

“The life sciences cluster has grown in Massachusetts for many reasons, none more important than the access to a highly talented workforce,” asserted Robert K. Coughlin, President and CEO of the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council. “In order to continue to enjoy strong growth in Massachusetts, the industry’s pipeline of workers - from skilled technicians, engineers, and scientists, to the many professional positions that support the industry - must continue to grow, and we will all work together to ensure that we are educating and preparing our future workforce for this vital industry.”

“Growing Talent” reflects a year-long collaborative process, highlighted by a well-attended Life Sciences Talent Initiative Summit in February 2008. This project was founded with two primary goals – to underscore the importance of talent to the Commonwealth’s academic medical centers, research institutions and biotechnology, pharmaceutical and medical device companies; and to generate renewed public and private commitment to investing in higher education and workforce training programs to meet the workforce needs of the life sciences industry.

“The richness of this study reflects the combination of thorough research and the full engagement of the stakeholders from industry, higher education, workforce development, and government,” stated Dr. J. Lynn Griesemer, Associate Vice President for Economic Development and Executive Director of the UMass Donahue Institute, UMass President’s Office.

Key recommendations include:

- Produce and retain more graduate students with interdisciplinary training in the sciences, mathematics, business, and legal and regulatory affairs
- Strengthen the interdisciplinary curriculum and experiential learning programs in undergraduate education
- Improve and target technical training to existing and emerging employer needs
- Expand the pipeline of K-12 students motivated and prepared to enter higher education and careers in science, technology, engineering and math fields

- Improve communication and coordination between the life sciences industry and higher education

The study can be found at the following links:

www.masslifesciences.com/talent/report.html

http://www.massbio.org/writable/files/LSTI_Report/report.pdf

http://www.donahue.umassp.edu/docs/growing_talent

Massachusetts Life Sciences Center

<http://www.masslifesciences.com/>

The Massachusetts Life Sciences Center (MLSC) is a quasi-public entity created by the Legislature's Economic Stimulus Bill in 2006 to promote the life sciences within Massachusetts. The Center is at the heart of the state's new \$1 billion life sciences law and is fast becoming the hub of connectivity for all sectors of the life sciences community - encouraging unprecedented public-private collaboration among industry, research, academia and government. The Center is making strategic investments in the life sciences workforce and in translational research at critical stages of the development cycle. These investments will foster and grow the Massachusetts life sciences super cluster, cultivating innovation at institutions whose research, development and commercialization of therapies, products and cures hold great promise for improving and saving lives.

The Massachusetts Biotechnology Council

<http://massbio.org/>

The Massachusetts Biotechnology Council (MBC), a not-for-profit organization that represents and provides services and support for the Massachusetts biotechnology industry, is the nation's oldest biotechnology trade association. Founded in 1985, the MBC is committed to advancing the development of critical new science, technology and medicines that benefit people worldwide. Representing over 600 biotechnology companies, academic institutions, research hospitals, and service organizations involved in life sciences and health care, the MBC works to advance policy and promote education, while providing member programs and events, industry information, and services.

The UMass Donahue Institute

<http://www.donahue.umassp.edu/>

Established in 1971, the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute is the public service, outreach, and economic development unit of the University of Massachusetts President's Office. The UMass Donahue Institute's Research and Evaluation and Economic and Public Policy Units specialize in economic and applied social science research, program evaluation, market research, policy research, and needs assessment. In collaboration with client organizations, the UMass Donahue Institute has developed over 400 reports, surveys, manuals, newsletters, and other publications of use to the public, including MassBenchmarks, a quarterly economics journal published by the University of Massachusetts in cooperation with the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. The UMass Donahue Institute also houses the Massachusetts State Data Center:

<http://www.massbenchmarks.org/statedata/statedata.htm>

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