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Life Sciences High School Apprenticeship Training Program Graduates Greater Boston and Worcester-area Students

WORCESTER and CAMBRIDGE – The Massachusetts Life Sciences Center (MLSC) and the BioBuilder Educational Foundation (BioBuilder) held their graduation ceremonies for the High School Apprenticeship Challenge Lab Training Program at Worcester Technical High School and LabCentral in Cambridge this week. 43 students from Greater Boston and Worcester-area public schools who are under-represented in the life sciences or economically disadvantaged have successfully completed an eight-week lab training program designed to prepare them for summer internships. The training was funded through a \$400,000 investment by the MLSC, which will also subsidize around 100 paid internship opportunities.

The training program, led by BioBuilder, focuses on science and bioengineering content knowledge, laboratory techniques, and professional skills that will prepare students for internship opportunities with local life sciences companies and research institutions. The program, hosted for the second year by the MIT Department of Biological Engineering, was expanded this year to also serve students from the Worcester public schools. The Worcester-area training was hosted by Worcester Technical High School. Participants will each receive a \$500 stipend for completing the training program and have an opportunity to apply for an internship through the MLSC website. Interns will receive stipends of up to \$2,880 (based on \$12/per hour for six weeks) that will be reimbursed by the MLSC.

“To ensure the ongoing strength of our life sciences workforce, we need to engage young people early and help them see the potential for careers in our state’s life sciences industry,” MLSC President and CEO Travis McCready said. “The High School Apprenticeship Challenge Lab Training Program is designed to increase scientific curiosity and scientific literacy in high school students from diverse communities. I congratulate this year’s class of graduates that were recognized at this week’s ceremonies, and look forward to seeing the contributions they will make to the Massachusetts life sciences ecosystem.”

The eight-week training program received generous support from Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, which donated \$6,000 worth of lab books, and MIT's Department of Biological Engineering, which provided lab and classroom space for the students.

"By offering the Apprenticeship Program in two locations this year, we have seen how relevant this kind of training is," said Natalie Kuldell, Ph.D., President and Founder of BioBuilder Educational Foundation. "This year's participants showed a tremendous appetite for the BioBuilder approach to learning. I have no doubt that these graduates can add value to their summer internship positions, and we're grateful to the local life science companies and academic labs who have partnered with us to extend the program into meaningful work and professional advancement."

"I really enjoyed the learning environment," said Lizeth Parra Arroyo, one of this year's program graduates. "The community was motivating, enriching and fun to work with. I learned how to plan and develop experiments while gaining confidence in the lab. I had never made a scientific team poster, nor did I ever imagine that it would be about an edible Alzheimer's diagnosis. I'm looking forward towards applying these skills in the near future."

"This program was an amazing opportunity that allowed me to have hands-on experience in the lab at a prestigious institution," said Susana Donkor of Boston. "I improved in my chemistry, public speaking skills, and teamwork. I was able to learn laboratory skills, which most people do not have the privilege of learning until college. Through this program, I was able to create a research project on extracting genes from a cactus and placing them into other plants, with an amazing team of classmates."

About the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center

The Massachusetts Life Sciences Center (MLSC) is an investment agency that supports life sciences innovation, education, research & development and commercialization. The MLSC is charged with implementing a \$1-billion, state-funded investment initiative. These investments create jobs and support advances that improve health and well-being. The MLSC offers the nation's most comprehensive set of incentives and collaborative programs targeted to the life sciences ecosystem. These programs propel the growth that has made Massachusetts the global leader in life sciences. The MLSC creates new models for collaboration and partners with organizations, both public and private, around the world to promote innovation in the life sciences. Learn more at www.masslifesciences.com.

About the BioBuilder Educational Foundation

BioBuilder bridges the gap between high school classrooms and university research by connecting the science and engineering done by professionals to the way these subjects are taught in high schools. By presenting authentic research questions in accessible, modular, and teachable form, BioBuilder fulfills its mission to spark interest, engagement and understanding in STEM fields. Conceptualized at MIT in 2007 by Dr. Natalie Kuldell and incorporated as a MA public charity in 2011, BioBuilder currently focuses on the emerging field of synthetic biology and brings investigative curriculum to high school students and teachers. Starting with 27 teachers in its first year, BioBuilder has grown rapidly to now involve more than 500 teachers in 40+ states and more than a dozen foreign countries.

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