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Friday, Sept. 18, 2009

## New biotech center aims to bolster industry

Offices in Rockville and Baltimore officially open

by Kevin James Shay | Staff Writer

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The new Maryland Biotechnology Center was quite beneficial to Darryl Sampey on Thursday.

Sampey, president and CEO of Rockville biopharmaceutical company BioFactura, found a report on pandemic flu markets through a database at the center's offices in the Shady Grove Innovation Center incubator in Rockville.

"I just got a \$10,000 report free," said Sampey, whose company moved into a new office earlier this year after several years in the incubator. "So this center is worth a lot to me. I definitely plan to use it again."

Industry and public officials heralded the formal opening of the Maryland Biotechnology Center this week in events in Rockville and at the World Trade Center in Baltimore. The center actually opened several months ago as one of Gov. Martin O'Malley's first initiatives of BioMaryland 2020, a state strategic plan for the biotech industry fine-tuned by the Maryland Life Sciences Advisory Board.

The center is designed to "help accelerate the rate" at which the state's biotech research capacity results in commercialized products and larger companies, said H. Thomas Watkins, president and CEO of Rockville biotech Human Genome Sciences who chairs the life sciences board. Watkins was among the speakers Thursday at the Shady Grove center.

Since forming in 1992, HGS has grown to be one of the state's larger biosciences businesses. Revenues in the first half of this year increased to \$204 million from about \$24 million in the same period last year. The company had 880 employees as of February, up from 284 workers in 1997, according to its annual reports.

The center is the "first key deliverable" of the 10-year, \$1.3 billion BioMaryland 2020 plan, O'Malley said in a statement. Legislators approved \$4.7 million for the center in fiscal 2010.

Christian S. Johansson, secretary of the Department of Business and Economic Development and Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett (D) were among those at the Rockville event Thursday.

Groups such as MdBio and the Greater Baltimore Committee plan to work with the center to build on the state's life science assets.

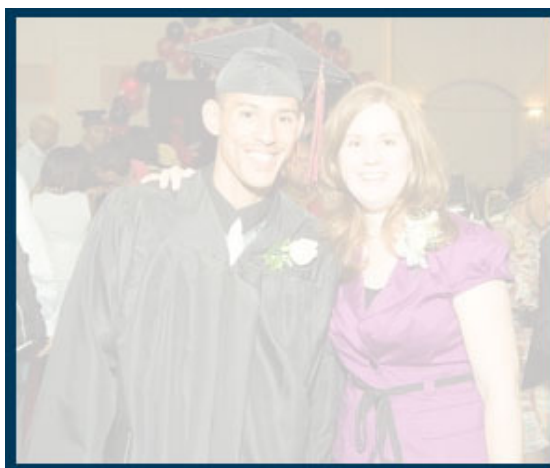
The center, which is under DBED, includes biotech, business and work force development specialists. They will help guide bioscience executives on issues such as business strategy and development, access to capital, commercialization, grants, work force development and federal resources. Acting executive director is Lawrence C. Mahan, formerly DBED's senior strategic adviser for biotechnology.

The center can get databases on a group discount rate and is working on expanding the use of databases, Mahan said. Many small biotechs can't afford the data that can really help them, he said.

"We'd also like to offer online access," Mahan said.

Staff members shift between the two offices, making sure each has work force and business specialists, he said. Having satellite offices in other areas, such as Frederick, Howard and Prince George's counties, may be considered, Mahan said.

BioMaryland 2020 also recommends forming an entrepreneurial resource program specifically designed to help new and emerging companies, along with establishing a life sciences venture capital trust to boost investment in Maryland's bioscience companies.



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The state has helped attract or expand more than 50 biotechs in the last two years, creating or retaining some 1,800 jobs, officials said. Companies helped include Aeras Global TB Vaccine Foundation in Rockville and OpGen in Gaithersburg.

Baltimore prepares for

World Stem Cell Summit

Starting Monday, Baltimore plays host to the 2009 World Stem Cell Summit, which organizers expect more than 1,200 scientists, researchers and others to attend. About 100 speakers will address topics such as regenerative medicine for wounded soldiers and civilians, international developments, nanotechnology and ethics during the three-day event at the Baltimore Convention Center.

Expected speakers include Curt Civin, director of the Center for Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine at the University of Maryland School of Medicine in Baltimore; Jeffrey D. Rothstein, co-director of the Brain Science Center at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore; Bernard Siegel, executive director of the Genetics Policy Institute in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.; O'Malley; University System of Maryland Chancellor William E. Kirwan; and Alan J. Lewis, president and CEO of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International in New York City.

Presented by the Genetics Policy Institute, the conference is hosted by Johns Hopkins University, the University System of Maryland, the Department of Business and Economic Development, the Maryland Technology Development Corp. and the Maryland Stem Cell Research Fund.

Maryland's bioscience industry

The state has more than 400 bioscience companies, representing about 8 percent of the U.S. bioscience industry, according to the Maryland Biotechnology Center. Annual revenues from Maryland companies: about \$2 billion.

Employment totals about 27,000, with a similar number in the federal and academic sectors. Average salary: about \$80,000.

About half of the state's industry is engaged in therapeutic development, with one-quarter supporting research services.

The state has invested more than \$700 million in infrastructure such as research parks, programs such as the Biotechnology Investor Tax Credit and direct investment over the past two decades.

Its bioscience research facilities receive some \$8 billion in research and development funds annually, ranking third after California and New Jersey.

Maryland ranked second in the nation, behind only Massachusetts, in the Milken Institute's technology and science index in 2008, up from fourth in 2004. The index ranks states based on factors such as science and tech facilities and access to venture capital. Maryland ranked first in Milken's 2008 human capital investment index, which measures how well states sustain employment in science and tech fields.

More information: [www.marylandbiocenter.org](http://www.marylandbiocenter.org)



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