
LABS WITH BENEFITS

Life Science and Schools Find Common Ground

Students Get in on Ground Floor of Industry Careers

By [Steve Adams](#) | Banker & Tradesman Staff | Sep 24, 2023 | [Reprints](#) | [Unlock Link](#) | [Print](#)



The message has been sent loud and clear by Boston residents and elected officials to life science developers.

Their lab projects need to create not only temporary jobs in the building trades, but open up permanent pathways into an industry that promises six-figure annual salaries and career advancement.

At life science projects under construction and preparing to break ground in Allston, the Seaport



A growing list of new lab projects in Boston are planning partnerships with local educational and workforce training programs designed to generate school-to-career pipelines, including Related Beal's 22 Drydock project anchored by Vertex Pharmaceuticals. Image courtesy of SGA and DREAM Collaborative

District and Roxbury's Nubian Square, new career academies and training centers for local students will occupy prominent ground-floor spaces. Researchers from a Massachusetts Institute for Technology spinoff, the Gloucester Center for Marine Genomics and a new nonprofit founded by trade group MassBio will run the new workforce training centers provided at free rent and built out by the real estate development teams.

Boosting awareness of biotech among the next generation will provide a competitive advantage to the Massachusetts life science industry, said Ben Bradford, MassBio's head of external affairs.

"One of the first questions I get when a company is thinking of expanding to Massachusetts is: 'Where can I get the workers?' It's a really nice amenity for developers to have a built-in workforce graduating within a space," Bradford said. "If they can walk downstairs and find employees, that makes a site that much more attractive."

Perfecting the Matchmaking Role

Matching developers with compatible workforce training academies has been an evolving model, reflecting the limited number of proven local examples to date.

Michael DiMinico, a partner at Boston-based life science developer King Street Properties, initially expected future tenants at the firm's 500,000-square-foot Allston Labworks development would take the lead in programming the educational spaces.

King Street is building out the Learning Lab, a 3,000-square-foot ground-floor space, including a classroom and wet lab, next to the main lobby of the project's first life science building which is scheduled to open in late 2024 at 250 Western Ave. The desire for an educational component for local students was a recurring theme of neighborhood residents during the project's permitting.

But it became clear that a third-party group would have to take the lead running the new career academy, DiMinico said. McDermott Assoc., which handled the project's community outreach for King Street Properties, found a successful model across the river in Cambridge and made the introductions.



King Street Properties is including a 3,000-square-foot facility called the Learning Lab in its under-construction 250 Western Ave. research building in Allston. Image courtesy of Dimella Shafer

BioBuilder is a nonprofit spinoff founded by biological engineering professor and MIT professor Natalie Kuldell in 2011, starting with a program for high school students at Kendall Square's LabCentral shared space facility.

Kuldell wanted to give Boston-area students the same opportunity she had growing up near the nation's capital, working in a research lab during high school in a program sponsored by the National Institutes for Health.

"I've always wanted to pull back the curtain on the amazing parts of science we don't always teach in the high school classroom," Kuldell said. "BioBuilder uniquely focuses on bringing students into the fold early."

BioBuilder's Learning Lab subsequently opened a second location at Ginkgo Bioworks' headquarters in South Boston, which has provided workforce training workshops for students, teachers and employees. More than 1,000 people have participated since 2021 at the company's Innovation and Design Building labs and classrooms, which were provided by the company at free rent.

At Allston Labworks, the Learning Lab will have a biomanufacturing training focus. Massachusetts life science industry leaders have identified the sector as a growth opportunity for local life science companies seeking domesticated drug production. Kuldell is seeking a sponsor to cover operational costs.

Schools Head to the Seaport District

Lincoln Property Co. sought to include a distinctive public benefit when it was seeking the designation from Massport to develop its parcel H on Congress Street in the Seaport District. Rather than another community or retail space that might be overlooked, developers and McDermott Ventures contacted then-MassBio CEO Robert Coughlin.

Coughlin immediately pointed out the industry's need for workforce training, CEO Pamela McDermott said, resulting in plans for the Life Science and Technology Career Training Center known as "The Pavilion." Lincoln Property is finalizing state permits and financing for the 650,000-square-foot development.



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A half-mile away in the Raymond L. Flynn Marine Park, Related Beal's Drydock 22 life science development will partner with the Gloucester Marine Genomics Institute on a biomanufacturing training program.

Underserved neighborhoods including Dorchester and Roxbury are also in the mix at developments led by Beacon Capital Partners and Nubian Ascends.

The former Boston Globe headquarters redevelopment as Southline Boston is building out a workforce training center scheduled to open in January. Known as Bioversity, the center is sponsored by MassBio and will have capacity for 100 people seeking entry-level jobs in the industry.

And the Nubian Ascends team led by Richard Taylor is partnering with Benjamin Franklin Cummings

School of Technology to create an associate's degree biomanufacturing program as part of its mixed-use redevelopment of the Blair lot parcel in Nubian Square.

"It's a wild and wooly landscape right now, and it's got all sorts of people involved," McDermott said. "The developers are just getting into the game, and I suspect you'll be seeing many more."

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