

Education • PARTNERS WITH A PURPOSE

# Partnership targets first-generation students for bioscience careers



High school students participate in a training program that prepares them to become certified in core bioscience skills through BioBuilder, an organization built at MIT that looks to educate students on careers in bioscience.

NATALIE KULDELL

By Nuria Diaz Munoz – Special to the Journal  
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## Story Highlights



- BioBuilder Educational Foundation and Kelly Science and Clinical launched a partnership to train high school students in bioscience skills.
- The eight-week program accepts 24 students per cohort twice yearly and places graduates in entry-level life science positions.
- BioBuilder has previously accepted 253 students from over 63 schools and helped secure more than 100 internships.

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BioBuilder Educational Foundation and Kelly Science and Clinical launched a partnership last year aimed at training young adults to bridge the gap between life science education and the workforce.

The initiative, which began last spring, accepts high school students into a training program that prepares them to become certified in core bioscience skills. At the end of the program, graduates are matched for entry-level positions at life science companies across the U.S.

“We want to give students an authentic experience in science, because we really believe that authenticity breed engagement and a sense of science identity,” Founder and Executive Director of BioBuilder Natalie Kuldell said.

Students participate in the programs at state-of-the-art Learning Labs at Ginkgo Bioworks in Boston's Seaport District or at Allston Labworks on Western Avenue, where they gain hands-on laboratory experience.

**Partnership At A Glance:**

**Duration of the partnership:** One year.

**Impact:** Job placement, career services

**Scope of Kelly Science:** Staffing agency with around 5,000 corporate employees.

**Scope of BioBuilder Educational Foundation:** An organization that educates students on careers in bioscience. Five full time and 10 part time employees.

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The program runs two cohorts each year – in the spring and fall – with 24 students per session. Funding comes from the city of Boston’s Office of Workforce Development, the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center, and UCB. Kuldell said outreach efforts have focused on increasing awareness of the program among high schools, particularly those serving underrepresented or first-generation college students.

“We ask that those we specifically aimed to inform schools that are either under resourced Title 1 schools or that had a large fraction of their student population as recent immigrants or their family,” Kuldell said. “They would be the first in their family to go to a U.S. university if they went to college.”

During the eight-week program, Kelly Science and Clinical staff lead workshops on résumé writing, biomanufacturing roles, and the biotechnology industry to prepare students for graduation in December. Kelly Science and Clinical Director of Recruitment Kinnari Saraiya said the students have been very interactive and are “stepping out of their comfort zone,” asking questions and taking part in mock interviews.

“It is a phenomenal program for individuals who may not be able to afford to go to college, but I want to gain the life skills of hands on pipetting work and learning GMP, everything that would be beneficial in this,” Saraiya said. “And for student to have a staffing firm have their back is kind of an exciting thing.”

Kelly Science and Clinical’s experience as a job placement firm enables them to create better opportunities for graduates, directly recommending students to their clients for entry-level positions.

Kuldell noted that through previous partnerships, BioBuilder has accepted 253 students from more than 63 schools, helping them earn around 220 micro-credentials and secure over 100 internships.

“We really need young people to look at science as a great career and that really needs to start with opportunities in high school,” Kuldell said. “Opportunities to do science, right? Walking a student through a lobby is great, building are beautiful but let them do real science.”

Both organizations look forward to continuing their partnership in the coming year, hoping to address the recent decline in STEM interest by offering more opportunities for hands-on learning.

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