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UMass. Dartmouth breaks ground for $28 million Accelerator for Biomanufacturing

July 19, 2012 - Construction Design & Engineering

Governor Deval Patrick joined UMass. president Robert Caret and UMass. Dartmouth chancellor Jean MacCormack and other local and state leaders to break ground on the Mass. Accelerator for Biomanufacturing at the University of Mass. Dartmouth (MAB). The builder is DPS Biometics and the architect is Elkus Manfredi Architects.

"Massachusetts is leading the world in the life sciences thanks to our growth strategy of investing in education, innovation and infrastructure," said Patrick. "I am proud of this investment and I look forward to seeing the Mass. Accelerator for Biomanufacturing create jobs and further strengthen our leadership in the life sciences."

On completion next fall, the MAB will be the only facility in the U.S. where startups will be able to test their biomanufacturing methods and bioproducts at every stage of development and access full-service support from business and marketing to pure science support - all under one roof, and 40 minutes' drive from Kendall Sq.

Also in attendance at the event were Fall River mayor Will Flanagan, Senator Michael Rodrigues, speaker pro tem Patricia Haddad, representative David Sullivan, William Kinney of the Fall River Redevelopment Authority and James Sabra of the Greater Fall River Development Corp.

The MAB

* Construction cost: $28 million
* Total size: 35,000 s/f
* Production/support space: 25,000 s/f
* On-site facilities: 4 production suites, quality control labs, an R&D suite, training lab, lecture halls, office suite and presentation/public access area.

Construction of the MAB will create approximately 120 jobs, and 10 UMass. Dartmouth employees will serve on staff. As the anchor tenant of the SouthCoast Life Science and Technology Park, the MAB is expected to leverage the creation of as many as 8,000 jobs once the park is operating at full capacity.

"I welcome this new facility as a sign of UMass Dartmouth's emergence as a major research enterprise within the University of Massachusetts," said Caret. "Currently, UMass is number one in life sciences patents among universities in Massachusetts and number two in New England for royalties from products we've commercialized. The MAB will build on the strengths of the UMass system, and take UMass Dartmouth to the next level in research."

This investment comes at precisely the right time: as rents in the heart of the life sciences supercluster rise - according to the Boston Globe, average rents in Kendall Sq. are almost twice as high Silicon Valley, with just a 5% vacancy rate - the barriers to new start-ups with industry-changing products and methods continue to rise.

"As a native son of Fall River, a proud alumnus of UMass Dartmouth and chairman of the UMass board of trustees, I am filled with pride today," said chairman James Karam. "UMass students and faculty will benefit by the opportunity to work elbow-to-elbow with life science professionals in world class laboratories. Our graduates will work in the companies locating at the center and at the companies that spin off from the center."

The MAB is designed to serve researchers and entrepreneurs as they scale up products and methods that will reshape the fields of biotherapeutics, biomedicine and green chemistry. Here, industry pioneers will grow antibodies to fight disease, generate new tissue from stem cells, create a new generation of biofuels, and more.

More than production scale-up and biomanufacturing research, the MAB will offer unique services to clients through the MAB Network, a web of preferred partners across the region and the state. Members of the Network will assay and validate products, and make seamless, cost-effective transitions to full-scale production a reality.

"This world-class Accelerator for Biomanufacturing will be a game changer," said MacCormack. "This is another strategic investment that enables UMass Dartmouth to fulfill its service mission to the Commonwealth and to expand its role as the anchor of the SouthCoast Innovation Triangle."

The MAB will also have the competitive advantage of access to some of the world's most talented and driven human talent in the industry - from renowned scientists and researchers to students and professors from UMass Dartmouth, the rest of the UMass, and other state colleges and universities.

The MAB will not just be safe, secure and state-of-the-art for partners. Because it is built to cGMP-like standards, it offers high quality at a lower cost - meaning greater flexibility and faster turnaround times to prove products and bring them to market.

Additionally, the MAB's state-of-the-art communications facilities and resources make it the perfect place for innovators to demonstrate new products to established biomanufacturers.

"The SouthCoast has a great deal to offer as a destination for biomanufacturing, and this new facility will serve as an anchor for efforts to attract industry to the region," said Susan Windham-Bannister, Ph.D., president & CEO of the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center, the agency charged with implementing Governor Patrick's ten-year, $1 billion Life Sciences Initiative. "This facility will also provide area students with opportunities to gain experience in, and increase the local talent pool of individuals with the skills needed for jobs in biomanufacturing."

The Commonwealth invested $14.6 million in the project through a capital grant from the Massachusetts Life Science Center. UMass Dartmouth is investing $10 million in capital funds; another $3 million is anticipated from equipment grants and corporate donations. In addition, the Commonwealth invested $38 million of ARRA funds to construct a new exit ramp from Route 24 that provides direct highway access to the 300-acre "Biopark" in Fall River - the largest ARRA-funded public works project in the Commonwealth.

"The UMass Building Authority is thrilled to bring projects like this one to reality that not only benefit the university and its students, but also add to the economic development of the region," said UMass Building Authority executive director Katherine Craven. "Our goal is to build a world-class facility unlike any other in the country that will keep entrepreneurs in the area and attract new life-science start-ups to Massachusetts."

Massachusetts biotech industry at a glance:

According to the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council, the state's biotech industry:

* Attracts nearly 1 in every 4 dollars of biotech venture capital investment nationwide

* Employs more than 48,000 in Massachusetts
* Employment has grown 52% since 2001
* Economic impact: $4.6 billion in salaries statewide (avg. $95,000 per year)
* The estimated average salary in the biotech industry is 77% higher than the state average salary of $53,834.

Shown (from left) are: Mass Life Sciences Center president Dr. Susan Windham-Bannister, UMBA executive director Katherine Craven, UMass president Robert Caret, president of the board of trustees James Karam, Governor Deval Patrick and Fall River mayor William Flanagan.