

R.I. DLT renews funding for university biotech programming

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05/14/2024



THE R.I.

DEPARTMENT of Labor & Training recently allocated an additional \$223,875 to the Rhode Island IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence's Workforce Development and Training program, which will enable it to run for another year. / COURTESY UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

SOUTH KINGSTOWN – As the Ocean State seeks to raise its profile in the regional and national life sciences sector, the R.I. Department of Labor and Training announced this month that it will fund a second year of a University of Rhode Island biotech initiative.

The Workforce Development and Training program, part of the Rhode Island IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence programming at URI, launched last year to provide students with “hands-on biomedical training” opportunities.

On May 3, URI announced that the program seems to have exhibited its value, as demonstrated through a new \$223,875 R.I. DLT allocation that will fund the program through the 2024-2025 academic year.

In total, the program has received more than \$600,000 in state funding with the new allocation.

Though housed at URI, students at all colleges and universities in Rhode Island can apply. Program leaders say the initiative is particularly geared toward students majoring in health sciences, chemical, biological and bioengineering fields.

“The purpose [of the program] is not necessarily to make [students] experts but to give them an idea of what’s happening in these areas and with these research skill sets,” said Bongsup Cho, a professor of pharmacy at URI and the RI-INBRE director. “After taking the modules, the students understand and appreciate these fields well. It takes the mystery out of biomedical research.”

The initiative has reached 67 students in its first year of programming, Cho said, and will expand to include biomanufacturing and bioengineering opportunities in its upcoming cycle.

RI-INBRE has applied for \$22 million in National Institutes of Health funding over the next five years to support its overall programming.

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