Bioscience: a thriving field

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Cover photo by Phil Skinner, philskinner.org

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

An Advertising supplement
Fastest-growing industry in Georgia includes botany, technology and research jobs.

By Melanie Watson

Bioscience industry jobs span a wide range, in areas such as technology, pharmaceuticals, marine biology, botany, veterinary medicine, clinical research and other cutting-edge disciplines being created by fast-growing companies.

The bioscience industry is growing faster than other job sectors, which means there are plentiful career options after you attain the education and training sought by employers. When you choose a career in bioscience, perks include stable employment and opportunities for promotions and salary increases.

Biosciences is booming in Georgia:

■ 1 out of every 40 jobs is within the realm of life sciences, according to the 2012 Georgia Life Sciences Industry Analysis.
■ More than 400 life science companies, some of which are spending millions on building facilities, are in Georgia.
■ Construction is underway on the $14 million Georgia BioScience Training Center near Covington to support the incorporation of more life science companies and boost job growth.

With the growing number of education programs in bioscience, this is a strong field for anyone considering changing careers or looking to enter the workforce.

If you seek to enter the field in a timely and affordable manner, pursuing one of these programs or degrees is a solid route for your next career step.

Considering a career in the biosciences? We’ve got you covered — read on for more. PHOTO / GETTY

CONTACT US >

EDU Atlanta is a monthly advertising special section about postsecondary education in metro Atlanta.

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Are you ready for a change?

Are you thinking about changing careers or looking for education in a different field? Find out if you’re ready to move forward by taking this quiz.

1. Do you feel unsatisfied or even stuck in your job?
2. Are you intrigued by the latest “hot careers” in health, technology and science?
3. Is it tough to find a path for growth in your current position?
4. Do you enjoy working with a variety of companies and people from different fields?
5. Have your life priorities changed (such as flexibility, autonomy, money, recognition, family), and does your job hinder your progress in those areas?
6. Do you enjoy asking questions about an issue or problem and trying to find the answer?
7. Can you imagine yourself taking a step in a new direction and making a change?
8. Do you consider yourself science or tech-savvy and intrigued by how processes work?
9. Do you value education as a personal asset that can further your career?
10. Do you like the idea of independence and working for yourself to meet goals?

SCORING YOUR ANSWERS
If you answered “yes” to 5 or more questions, you could be ready for a career change. In fact, the bioscience field could be a great fit for you! People in the bioscience field can work as laboratory assistants, researchers, technologists and policymakers to promote better health, technology and science for society. They ask questions and seek answers, work on teams and individual projects, and sometimes create products to prevent or treat diseases. The field is growing faster than average for the next 10 years and will offer tons of job opportunities for new employees.

COVER STORY
Many options in thriving biosciences field

Piedmont College student Randy Persaud pauses between classes. See page 8 for his story and more. CONTRIBUTED
Free Tuition for Gwinnett Tech Bioscience Students

Gwinnett Tech and Southern Polytechnic Partnership Offers Big Opportunities.

Gwinnett Technical College's articulation agreement with Southern Polytechnic State University (SPSU) enables GTC bioscience graduates to earn their bachelor's degree — with tuition, fees and expenses covered.

Gwinnett Tech's Bioscience Technology program formed a partnership with SPSU, which recently merged with Kennesaw State University, in 2013. The 2+2 Agreement allows Gwinnett Tech students with an associate degree in Bioscience Technology to transfer all of their coursework to SPSU and complete a Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) in Biotechnology at the university in two additional years.

The SPSU degree is supported by a federal grant that covers tuition, fees and additional expenses for students accepted to the SPSU program.

Bioscience vocations include a broad range of opportunities, including those in health care, food sciences, industrial and environmental workplaces. For bioscience graduates who want to continue their education beyond the associate degree, the partnership with SPSU offers a path to higher degrees.

Gwinnett Tech's Bioscience Technology program is laboratory-centered and produces graduates who can work effectively in modern, state-of-the-art laboratories in careers such as research, quality assurance and medical diagnostics. GTC's labs feature the latest in lab technologies, including two mass spectrometers, a nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometer, inductively coupled plasma spectrometer, liquid and gas chromatography, and several polymerase chain reaction cyclers.

GTC students also have the opportunity to become independently involved in an active research project that seeks new anti-cancer molecules and have an option for extended internships in labs in the industry.

Five Gwinnett Tech bioscience grads have already been accepted into the SPSU program, including Kristina Palermino and Gabrielle Holenstein. While at GTC, Palermino, completed her internship at Yerkes Regional Primate Center Veterinary Labs at Emory University. Holenstein was an intern for CSI Laboratories, a large medical diagnostic service lab in North Fulton.

Georgia's bioscience and life sciences sector is one of the state's fastest growing, with strong job demand anticipated for the future.

Currently, Georgia is home to more than 360 life sciences companies, most of them focused on health care applications, ranging from established to start-up pharmaceutical biotechnology, medical device, diagnostic, medical supply and medical informatics companies; and contract laboratory, preclinical and clinical research organizations.

Gwinnett Tech offers a degree program in Bioscience Technology, plus certificate options in Bioscience Environmental Laboratory Technology, Bioscience Regulatory Assurance Technology and Healthcare Science.

GTC offers more than 50 degree, diploma and certificate student options that can be completed in two years or less. For more information, visit www.GwinnettTech.edu or call 770-962-7580.

Get the latest news about Gwinnett Tech: http://www.gwinnettech.edu/news.
Mercer University admitted to Georgia Research Alliance

Research and development expenditures are $30 million; doctoral students exceed 350.

Mercer University has been admitted to the Georgia Research Alliance, whose mission includes expanding research and commercialization capacity in Georgia’s universities to launch new companies and create jobs.

Mercer becomes the first Georgia institution south of the Interstate 20 corridor to join the alliance.

Over the past decade, Mercer’s annual research and development expenditures have grown from less than $18 million to more than $30 million, and the number of doctoral students enrolled has grown from fewer than 25 to more than 350.

“The Georgia Research Alliance is an important organization that is contributing in significant ways toward building a 21st century economy in Georgia,” Mercer President William D. Underwood said in a statement. “Mercer scientists are already doing important work that is contributing to this endeavor, particularly in the areas of biosciences and engineering. The university’s membership in GRA will open up even more opportunities for our researchers to collaborate with other scientists as well as business leaders and make even more significant contributions to building our economy in Georgia.”

Since its formation in 1990, the alliance, an independent nonprofit organization aligned with Georgia’s Department of Economic Development, has leveraged $595 million of state funding into:

- $2.6 billion of direct federal and private investment in Georgia;
- More than 150 newly launched companies;
- More than 6,000 high-skill, high-value jobs;
- A portfolio of beneficial inventions, processes and technologies.

The alliance’s work is accomplished in part by recruiting world-class scientists to Georgia universities as GRA Eminent Scholars, by investing in state-of-the-art research technology for university labs and by fueling commercialization of university-based discoveries and inventions.

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workingadults.mercer.edu
Making it Work

Gwinnett Tech’s Rasheeda Lake

By Hunter Lacey

Rasheeda Lake, 35, found her passion for radiology in the X-ray laboratory at a veterinary clinic. The Gwinnett Tech Radiologic Technology program is helping her move from one species to another.

Lake plans to graduate in April with her associate degree from the program. Since 1986, the program has achieved a 99.9-percent overall pass rate from the American Registry of Radiologic Technologies certifying exam.

My interest: I worked for about 11 years as a vet tech. I found myself enjoying doing X-rays on animals. I wanted to do that (X-rays) only, so I decided to go back to school to be able to hone in on one profession. Let’s say you take a regular X-ray of a foot. You get to see all the individual bones and the joints in between the bones, and you know you could be making the difference between their doctor knowing if something is broken or misplaced.

It’s good to know you’re helping out a patient in such a quick way.

My time management: Our program is a 40-hour workweek, so it’s a full-time job, but it’s doable. I work on the weekends as a vet tech. I also have two kids, and I’m married, so you really have to juggle to make sure you can give enough time to everyone and not feel bad when you can’t, because there’s only so much you can do in one week. I try to study every day instead of the night before a test, and I make time either before or after studying to have fun with my family or relax.

My experience: I think back to the beginning interview process to get into the program, when they ask you what happens if you don’t get continued on 7
accepted. My answer to them was, I will see you next year, because I will keep applying until I get into this program. I had heard nothing but good things about the reputation of the instructors and then I got to actually experience it firsthand.

My advice: This has to be something you are passionate about. You can’t go into this thinking, “I just want this as a job because it looks neat.” You won’t be able to give it the time needed to be really great.

The Lake family gets behind mom’s educational journey. Rasheeda Lake will graduate with an associate degree from the Gwinnett Tech Radiologic Technology program in April. CONTRIBUTED BY PHIL SKINNER

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Brought to you by Georgia’s public colleges, technical colleges, and universities
Biosciences: A field growing to include you

By Rachel Brannon, Laura James and Melanie Watson

Whether you envision working with patients, poring over health exams, records and statistics, or conducting research in a lab, the biosciences industry offers opportunities to move your career in a new direction.
Baxter International Inc. is building a bioscience facility in Covington. Baxter predicts its investments at the site to exceed $1 billion by the time the facility is fully operational in 2018. The company expects to create 1,500 full-time positions locally to operate the plant. CONTRIBUTED

The starting salary for various jobs in bioscience ranges from $30,000-$40,000 a year. With a technical college education, you can move from the classroom into a career within two years.

Georgia is poised for a surge in biosciences hiring, which is another reason to explore this field. Job opportunities include cardiology technician, biotech instrumentation and calibration, life science lab technician, biology lab assistant or technician, radiology technician and veterinary technician, among others.

Baxter International, which is building a $1 billion plasma products manufacturing campus near Covington, expects to hire 1,500 technicians, and those are likely to include graduates of the state’s technical colleges, said Jeff Rapp, chair of the Athens Technical College biotechnology program.

Due to the expected expansion of jobs, schools

**BIOSCIENCE PROGRAMS GROWING**

Some of Georgia’s technical colleges are boosting their biosciences programs. Here’s a quick snapshot of some of the newest offerings — either available now or in 2015.

Central Georgia Technical College
- Bio-Technology Lab Assistant
- Echocardiography
- Healthcare Science

Georgia Northwestern Technical College
- Vascular Technology

Georgia Piedmont Technical College
- Opticianry
- Medical Assisting

North Georgia Technical College
- Paramedicine

Coastal Pines Technical College
- Healthcare Science

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within the Technical College System of Georgia and other colleges are striving to provide training that employers seek when hiring.

Some of the metro area’s technical colleges have partnerships with employers that offer students real-life experience before graduating and help graduates secure jobs. WellStar, for example, donated equipment for a radiography lab at Chattahoochee Technical College that has the setup of an actual hospital. Graduates of the radiologic technology programs at Chattahoochee Tech and Gwinnett Technical College continue to achieve 100-percent pass rates on the American Registry of Radiologic Technologies certifying exam, demonstrating how metro area students are being prepared for jobs.

THE EXPERT

Atlanta Technical College began its bioscience program in 2012 after receiving a $4.8 million grant from the Georgia Department of Labor. Changes continue, as it is preparing for student growth by renovating five laboratory spaces within the college. Bioscience is a recession-proof industry, said Barry Bates, the program coordinator for the Atlanta Technical College’s bioscience program, which is grooming students for this booming job sector.

Q: Why should someone be interested in the biosciences field?

A: I call bioscience the science of now. This is the way that both science and the industry are moving. This is a global field, and a lot of these jobs will be needed over time, so these skill sets are going to be in high demand.

Q: Can you speak of any unique successes that have resulted from your program?

A: One of our students participated in a SEA Semester study abroad program where she lived on a boat for several months while conducting research in the Pacific Ocean. To be a relatively new program (at Atlanta Tech), it was phenomenal to have a student participate in such a prestigious opportunity.

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Q: What kind of training does Atlanta Tech offer?
A: We offer a heavy focus on laboratory experiences. We have connections with Georgia Bio, Baxter and National, the Morehouse School of Medicine and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. We also have a cell culture lab, which is not very common on this level at a number of institutions. We offer technical certificates of credit that can be earned in as little as two semesters. We’re preparing students directly for the workforce while also giving them a foundation they can expand on.

THE GRADUATE

At Athens Technical College’s biotechnology program, students earn a two-year associate of applied science degree, which can lead to jobs in biomanufacturing, pharmaceuticals, diagnostics, and research or environmental labs.

The typical annual salary of the college’s biotechnology program graduates is $30,000-$32,000, but some biotech companies pay up to $42,000, according to school officials. In fall 2013, 88 students were enrolled in the biotechnology program, out of 6,349 total at Athens Tech students.

Randy Persaud, 21, graduated in 2014 with an associate’s in biotechnology and certificates in laboratory technician, and water and wastewater treatment. Through the Technical College System of Georgia’s articulation agreement with four-year institutions, Persaud, of Monroe, plans to graduate in two years with a bachelor’s in chemistry from Piedmont College.

Q: What’s exciting about this industry?
A: The field is massive and it’s growing, and there are so many applications. It’s almost hard to even find a place to start.

Q: What’s your dream job?
A: Something along the lines of instrumental analysis. It could be anything from carbohydrates to proteins. I think this is something I’d really enjoy.

Q: What kind of job are you looking to get after graduating?
A: I wouldn’t mind being a healthcare privacy officer in a hospital. Those would be the people who if you want to request records or something like that.

Q: What type of salary are you expecting?
A: They can actually start around $35,000, and it increases with education and experience.

Q: What challenges come with trying to get into this field?
A: The only challenge is that although it’s a growing career field, it’s hard to get into because it’s one of those jobs that people get in and they stay in. It’s hard to get in, and they always want people with a lot of experience.

THE STUDENT

After serving in the U.S. Air Force, Tiffany Journey, 24, enrolled in Herzing University’s online health information management program. With previous college credits, the four-year program only took Journey two years at Herzing, which has an Atlanta campus. Journey plans to take her Registered Health Information Administrator (RHIA) certification test and graduate in December.

Q: What opportunities did you see in the health information management field?
A: Coming from dealing with records management (while working for the Air Force), I know that I actually like the organization part about it. I did my research and in the next, what, probably five to 10 years, this is going to be the career field that’ll grow because of the new law of having to switch from paper records to electronic records. It’s one of those fields where you have so many job descriptions, so many titles; you can do a lot of stuff in this field.

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Online Learning Opportunities Continue to Expand

By George Avalos
Contra Costa Times

Education is getting a boost from the online world and mobile broadband communications, which helps introduce learning techniques that stray from traditional methods.

Several up-and-coming companies that provide online tutorials, including Udemy, Udacity, Khan Academy, 2U and Coursera, are offering ways for people to educate themselves online, with many courses geared toward practical knowledge and skills for a fast-changing and often forbidding eco-

Students go to these websites and poke around until they find courses that interest them.

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Who’s Hiring?

Atlanta Center for Medical Research (ACMR)

By Brittin Ray

Atlanta Center for Medical Research (ACMR), which conducts clinical trials to research central nervous system disorders and other therapeutic areas, is among the Georgia companies expanding its workforce. ACMR, which was founded in 1980, is moving into a new $25 million facility with 150,000 square feet in southwest Atlanta this month.

The company has 115 employees, including hourly and salaried, and part-time and full-time workers, and expects to grow to a total of 300 employees in the next year. Positions range from research assistants to doctors, and human resources representative Katie Jones discussed the opportunities.

Q: What kind of workers does ACMR look for?
A: We are looking for people who have a real drive and interest in research and advancing medication to help people with — particularly at this time — mental disorders. As we expand, we will be able to do a lot more in other capacities such as expanding into other types of medical trials. We’re looking for a passion with these fields. Educational backgrounds vary with the type of position. We do have entry-level positions for which we hire people with bachelor’s degrees, and we do have positions that require only high school diplomas. We have a lot of opportunities for a variety of backgrounds.

Q: Does ACMR offer onsite training or education?
A: We do train our staff and we also offer employees financial support to obtain their Certified Clinical Research Coordinator, which is our professional certification in this field.

Q: Are there opportunities for growth within ACMR?
A: I think growth within the company is one of our strongest assets. We really encourage our employees to grow within the company. For example, I started out as a research assistant, which is a great way to learn about the company, to learn about how we operate and to learn about research in general. There are many avenues for those in an entry-level position to grow. We do like to promote from within.

Q: Why would someone want to work for ACMR?
A: ACMR is one of the leaders in our industry. We have definitely made progress and have helped advance the industry. We work for pharmaceutical companies and we currently primarily focus on central nervous system disorders. Our staff really enjoys the work that they do. They really enjoy making a difference at a larger scale.

In the biosciences, you never know who — or what — you’ll meet

Alyssa Y. Stark, a Ph.D. candidate in the integrated bioscience program in the biology department at the University of Akron in Ohio, appears with one of the many geckos she is studying for the adhesive capabilities of their toe pads. KAREN SCHIELY / AKRON BEACON JOURNAL
Georgia’s Go Back, Move Ahead seeks students

By Brittini Ray

The state is looking to enroll more than just its 2014 graduating high school class in postsecondary education this academic year.

The new “Go Back, Move Ahead.” program is part of the Complete College Georgia Initiative, which strives to make it easier for older, non-traditional students to return to college.

The program, also referred to as GBMA, aims to simplify the enrollment process, offer ways to transfer credits, and provide flexible scheduling as well as a personal academic advisor for students.

“The goal is to get as many as we can of the 1.2 million Georgians who have some college, but have yet to achieve some sort of credential, whether it’s a technical college certificate of diploma, or a degree from a university system college,” said Mike Light, TCSG spokesman.

With a degree, students will be qualified for better jobs and higher pay, and will help attract more companies to Georgia, Light said.

Here’s what you should know about “Go Back, Move Ahead.”:

■ Launched in July 2014, the program is a collaborative effort of the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) and the University System to Georgia to encourage residents to earn a one-year certificate, associate degree or bachelor’s degree.

■ Requirements include a high school diploma, GED or current enrollment in GED program.

■ Residents can take courses online and on campus at 53 state institutions.

■ Residents can apply for state financial aid such as the Zell Miller Grant and HOPE Grant. The Zell Miller Grant covers full tuition at any TCSG institution and requires a 3.5 GPA after enrollment. The HOPE Grant covers 67 percent of tuition costs at most TCSG institutions and does not have a high school GPA requirement.

Website: gobackmoveahead.org
Phone: 1-844-GoBackNow

CONTRIBUTED
nomic landscape.

“This is all part of lifelong learning,” said Dennis Yang, president of San Francisco-based Udemy. “People feel they must train endlessly just to stay in the game.”

Courses at the online schools include basic algebra, computer science and physics, along with skill training for Web development and launching startups. Courses on artificial intelligence and how to build a computer language are also available.

“Online learning is not new, but what is new is what is possible now with the technology that is available to us,” said Clarissa Shen, a vice president with Mountain View, California-based Udacity. “There is a huge amount of scale and the experience is very rich.”

Students typically go to these websites and poke around until they find courses that interest them. At least that’s what San Francisco resident Tyler Dylan Brown did when he connected with Udemy. While on a mission as an Army Airborne Ranger, Brown broke his ankle, and later broke his leg in 2012 when he fell down a hill. His forced convalescence enabled him to explore the Internet, where he came across Udemy.

“Udemy gives you the information in a no-nonsense manner,” Brown said. “You can rapidly learn the skills, apply those skills, then train others in those skills.”

The online classes mirror a great strength of the Internet: while the Web has a vast reach, much like a broadcast, it also enables people to access information on a very narrow topic.

“Udemy is for applied skills, it’s not just to go learn something new,” Brown said. “It’s very practical. You are learning something so you can do something.”

Brown has taken about 50 courses at Udemy and is currently working on five or six others. The great majority of those, he said, are about business and startups. He’s also taken some design classes.

“I’m working with a fellow veteran, and we are working with a doctor to develop wellness programs for veterans,” Brown said.

At Udemy, about 75 percent of the courses are free. Others are available for a fee ranging from $10 to $500.

For $500, for example, students can take a course on management the “Welch Way,” a reference to former General Electric top boss Jack Welch. A fee of $499 gets you a class on developing iPad and iPhone apps in one hour. For $19, you can take a course on raising money for startups or learn about social media marketing for startups. In between those prices, you can pay $99 for a Microsoft PowerPoint tutorial or $199 to become a certified Web developer.

Brown says he often looks for online coupons to help slash the costs of the courses. A Web search for Udemy coupons brings up several sites including RetailMeNot, ProCouponCode and CouponsPower.

The instructors who offer these online courses enjoy being able to provide an eclectic menu of items for their online students.

“My courses are very consumer-oriented,” said Chet Davis, a Udemy instructor. These consumer-oriented courses include learning to use your iPhone, using your camera phone and basics on electronic cables and connectors.

The courses also are offered in small chunks, Davis said, with each section lasting 10 to 15 minutes.

“You can learn a little bit at a time,” he said. “People with busy schedules want to learn something specific, but not necessarily spend a whole lot of time on it in a session.”

But it is the wide availability of broadband networks that makes it possible for instructors to use video and stream their courses. Basic courses such as Microsoft Excel and PowerPoint training, as well as more complex courses such as the management class, use streaming video for the classes.

“Video is a very engaging way to connect with the content,” Yang said.

Udacity estimates that about 1.3 million students are enrolled in its online courses. The student base at Udemy is 500,000.

Increasingly, online schools are offering courses that are accredited and count for college credit. Udacity has launched a partnership with San Jose State University. Udacity has about 1.3 million students.

Khan Academy: The Mountain View, California-based site offers a wide array of courses covering subtopics under the math, science, history, art and computer science umbrellas. All courses are free. The site has about 6 million unique users each month.

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