

# UMBC News

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## **ACTiVATE<sup>®</sup> Announces New Program at NIH**

### ***Program Will Provide Pathway to Entrepreneurship for Postdocs***

University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) has received an award from the National Science Foundation (NSF) through their Partnerships for Innovation program to establish an ACTiVATE<sup>®</sup> at NIH program in Montgomery County. The program, slated to start in early 2010, will train post-doctoral research fellows from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and other federal labs in the region to start technology-based companies.

Building on the successful ACTiVATE<sup>®</sup> program at UMBC, which trains mid-career women to start companies using technologies developed at area universities and research institutions, ACTiVATE<sup>®</sup> at NIH will provide postdocs (both men and women) with the training and support needed to start new companies in Maryland or to pursue an entrepreneurial career path.

Each year, Maryland's workforce loses many of the highly skilled, post-doctoral fellows at NIH and other federal labs in the region as these individuals seek employment outside of the state when their fellowships are completed. The economic impact of losing these scientists, coupled with the fierce competition that they face for positions in academia, created the opportunity for a program to train researchers to pursue commercialization of their scientific findings. Giving post-doctoral fellows the skills to transform research into viable businesses will not only give them a rewarding career path and contribute to the growth of Maryland's life sciences industry, but will also advance medical science by moving technologies from the laboratory to the marketplace.

Following the original ACTiVATE<sup>®</sup> program model, ACTiVATE<sup>®</sup> at NIH will recruit both postdocs and individuals from the business community as participants so they can form interdisciplinary teams to pursue opportunities for start-up companies. The Johns Hopkins University Carey Business School, a key partner in the program, will receive funding under the award to offer ACTiVATE<sup>®</sup> at NIH at their Shady Grove campus in

Rockville. The program will span one calendar year, with classes held one evening per week and one Saturday per month. Program participants will be mentored by experienced entrepreneurs and others from the business community.

Through a partnership with the NIH Office of Technology Transfer, participants will have the opportunity to evaluate technologies from NIH and other federal labs as part of the program. Other program partners include Rockville Economic Development, Inc. (REDI), Montgomery College, Human Workflows LLC and the Montgomery County Department of Economic Development.

“We are pleased to expand the ACTiVATE® model to Montgomery County and to offer the program to the talented group of scientists working as postdocs at NIH and other federal labs in the region. In the course of four years, the program at UMBC has trained 92 women and launched over 25 companies; we hope to bring that same success to this new venture,” said Stephen Auvil, assistant vice president for research at UMBC and a co-principal investigator on the NSF award.

“REDI has long supported efforts to capitalize on the talent in our federal labs, and ACTiVATE® at NIH is an excellent opportunity to leverage cutting-edge technologies and keep Maryland at the forefront of the life sciences industry. We will work closely with our partners to ensure the success of this program,” said Sally Sternbach, executive director of REDI. “We look forward to growing these companies in our local economy.”

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**About the ACTiVATE® program:**

The original ACTiVATE® program is a joint program of bwtech@UMBC’s Incubator and Accelerator, the UMBC Office of Technology Development, and the Alex. Brown Center for Entrepreneurship. The year-long program utilizes technologies developed by Maryland’s universities and research institutions and trains mid-career women with significant technical or business experience to start companies based on those technologies. In its first four years, the ACTiVATE® program has trained 92 women and has launched over 25 companies. The program was initially funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation. Current sponsors include the Maryland Technology Development Corporation (TEDCO), the Ewing Marion Kaufman Foundation, Venable LLP, Corporate Office Properties Trust, Miles & Stockbridge PC, Whiteford, Taylor, and Preston LLP, and SB and Company LLC.

**About bwtech@UMBC:**

bwtech@UMBC is a 71-acre research and technology community at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). It comprises the technology business Incubator and Accelerator, home to over 30 early-stage high-tech and life science companies, and the Research and Technology Park, with a capacity of 350,000 square feet of office and laboratory space. bwtech@UMBC offers collaboration with university faculty and students, and enjoys a strategic and convenient location, close to downtown Baltimore,

BWI Thurgood Marshall Airport, and Washington, D.C. bwtech's annual economic impact on the state is estimated to be over \$300 million.

**About UMBC:**

UMBC is a medium-sized public research university of 12,000 undergraduate and graduate students who collaborate with faculty to address real-world challenges. Located just south of Baltimore near I-95 and the BWI airport, UMBC's residential campus houses state-of-the-art facilities in the sciences, engineering, arts, social sciences and humanities. UMBC combines the energy of a research university with the close community feel and attention to individual students found in liberal arts colleges.