

Massasoit Community College awarded grant of \$99,947 from the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center

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Massasoit Community College has been awarded a grant of \$99,947 from the **Massachusetts Life Sciences Center**. The funds will enable the college to purchase the laboratory equipment and supplies necessary to develop curriculum in biotechnology. Specifically, Massasoit will establish courses in Cellular Biology, Molecular Biology, and Biotechnology as well as develop a Biotechnology Certificate and a Biotechnology Option in its Liberal Arts Transfer Associate's Degree Program. **Dr. Rachel Hirst** and **Dr. Gilles Bolduc**, both Assistant Professors in Biology at Massasoit, will lead the project.

These new curricular offerings will build on Massasoit's strong and well-established science curriculum and its successful undergraduate research initiatives. Massasoit's Science and Mathematics Division is in the process of enhancing its curriculum to include more inquiry-based laboratories and more undergraduate research opportunities. These efforts are in place to give students early exposure to the laboratory environment, providing them with marketable skills for entry into the workforce or for transfer to a four-year institution.

The 29-credit Biotechnology Certificate is designed for individuals looking to acquire additional skills and knowledge in laboratory methodologies necessary for employment in commercial, industrial, and academic institutions. Students who already have an associate's or bachelor's degree in science may choose to enroll in the certificate program to acquire skills in handling and maintaining laboratory equipment, laboratory safety, and media making – skills not traditionally obtained through laboratory-based courses. In conjunction with their degree, these students will be equipped to enter the life sciences workforce as trained entry-level laboratory assistants. The certificate program is also appropriate for students without a prior degree. Completing the certificate will prepare these students to enter the life sciences workforce directly in entry-level laboratory positions. Students who earn the certificate may also apply the 29 credits toward an associate's degree at Massasoit.

The Liberal Arts Transfer – Biotechnology Option Associate's Degree will prepare students to transfer to a four-year institution but will also qualify them to enter a commercial or academic laboratory armed with basic skills and knowledge in laboratory methods and techniques.

Massasoit is also working with life sciences industry partners – including Millennium, Organogenesis, and Vertex Pharmaceuticals – to develop internship and job shadowing opportunities for students in the new certificate and associate's degree option programs.