

EXPANDING DIVERSITY IN THE BIOPHARMACEUTICAL WORKFORCE

WORDE: A BIOPHARMACEUTICAL TRAINING CENTER TO PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORKFORCE, OUTREACH, RESEARCH, DIVERSITY, AND EDUCATION



**Delaware State University,
Dover, DE**

Type:
Academic Institution

Participating Organizations:
Merck & Co., Inc., Montgomery
County Community College



» *Derrick Scott, Delaware State University*

INDUSTRY NEED

As the biopharmaceutical industry looks to fill talent gaps, it has emphasized increasing diversity within its workforce as an essential factor. Companies are looking for talented, diverse candidates who can hit the ground running and step into roles without extensive training time. New educational programs that are accessible to underrepresented populations could expand the talent pipeline and offer students a pathway to a successful career in the biopharmaceutical industry.

SOLUTION

Delaware State University (DSU), a Historically Black College and University, set out to establish the WORDE Institute (Workforce, Outreach, Research, Diversity, and Education), offering new opportunities for students in the growing biopharmaceutical industry. The goal of the institute is to prepare the next generation of a diverse and knowledgeable workforce by coupling a competitive educational curriculum with essential hands-on training. Leveraging the expertise and guidance from its partners, Merck & Co, Inc. and Montgomery County Community College, DSU installed equipment and developed curriculum for the new biomanufacturing program. In addition, DSU researchers underwent training to become instructors in the new program during a week-long bootcamp at Merck & Co., Inc., during which they enhanced their knowledge of industry needs to further support program participants.

OUTCOME

In the fall of 2021, DSU soft launched the WORDE Institute with an initial cohort of four students. The students took part in classroom instruction and hands-on training in upstream processing, downstream processing, and analytics. As part of the program, students spent time at the Jefferson Institute for Bioprocessing (JIB) in Philadelphia, one of the premier bioprocessing training centers in the country. Two students have received internship offers from JIB. After the program's first semester, DSU aims to have 12 students enrolled in the program by 2024. It is well on its way to meeting that goal as more than 10 students to date have expressed interest in entering the biopharmaceutical field.



“When I attended conferences in the past, I noticed there were not a lot of people of color. Dr. LaTia Scott said, ‘If you want to see a change, go out and create it.’ This program and the support of NIIMBL and our partners are helping us to do that.”