

Center of Bio-processing Operations Begins

Mariam Ludim Rosa Vélez

Translated by Tia Gilson

The advancement of biotechnology in Puerto Rico moves forward. This is the mission of the new Bio-process Development and Training Center (BDTC), which began its operations last week.

The Center is the product of a combined inversion of \$12.5 million between the Puerto Rico Industrial Development Company (PRIDCO), the University of Puerto Rico (UPR), the Department of Federal Commerce, the subdivision of Economic Development Administration, and private sectors.

At the inauguration of the BTDC, on the 11th of September, the Governor of Puerto Rico, Anibal Acevedo Vila noted, that the Center would allow the generation of intellectual property in Puerto Rico and promote a new class of scientists and specialized students in the development of bioprocesses.

“This Center optimally combines the rigor of academic environments with the common sense of the business world. The purpose is to continue increasing the availability of trained and specialized human capital that is required in the Bio-Science Industry,” said the Governor.

UPR’s president, Antonio Garcia Padilla said that this academic collaboration is very important because it is the universities that produce the human capital required in the country.

“It’s a restructuring of the 21st century to the necessities of the industrial base. It represents the time-honored promise of the University to provide the most capable and trained talents to foster the country’s needs,” said Garcia Padilla.

For Boris Jaskille, director of PRIDCO, the opening of the Center marks an important milestone in the strategy to consolidate Puerto Rico as a world-class competitor in the economy of knowledge.

“The project optimally combines the rigor of academic environments with the common sense of the business world and is designed to generate results that propel economic development and job opportunities in Puerto Rico”, said Jaskille.

Likewise, the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez’s (UPRM) chancellor, Dr. Jorge Ivan Vélez Arocho, said that the Bio-processing plant will provide the Industrial Bio-technology program at UPRM the platform to support, at a higher level, the Biotechnical industry in Puerto Rico, by means of the training and investigation that will take place there.

“The Pilot Bio-processing Plant illustrates, by its presence, the concrete possibility to generate a link between the government, the industry and the University to the potential economic development of the country or region,” said Vélez Arocho.

About the Center

The Center includes a complex of 28,751 square feet in the Guanajibo Industrial Park of Mayagüez, and has the most sophisticated technology to facilitate the development of bioprocesses and projects of investigation and development.

The new additions will include laboratories, with the capabilities to develop processes of fermentation, cultivation of cells, purification of proteins and characterization of molecules. Also, these additions will house a training center with fully-equip conference rooms, distance learning technology, an amphitheatre and a

laboratory for small group instruction geared up for typical situations that are similar to those in a biotechnology plant.

The training center will serve as much students that are interested in entering the field of biotechnology, as it will employees of companies that are incorporating this type of processing in their systems. The laboratories will be available to private companies for the purpose of academic investigation.

UPRM Biotechnology Week

The initiation of operations at BDTC coincided with the fifth time UPRM has celebrated its Biotechnology Week.

During the week, 40 students from UPRM's Biotechnology program participated in a workshop, at the Center, about bioreactors.

Also, Miguel Pereira of *Amgen* granted scholarships of \$2,000 to the students of Gretchen Rodriguez Gonzalez, Astrid Rodriguez Cardona, Alejandro Berrocal Bravo y Luis Aleman Pagan.

On Tuesday the 9th of September the initiation of the Industrial Biotechnology Student Association was carried out in the BDTC amphitheatre.