

DEFINING BIOTECHNOLOGY IN THE GULF COAST REGION

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Hi-tech is the old bubble. The new sparkle is the biotech expansion, something that no one wants to miss out on. Fast growth and high pay are the expectations for economic development. But, what is it and whose definition of biotechnology will drive the economic numbers?

The “biotechnology industry” is not a specific industry, but a combination of industries. It is much like the Gulf Coast region’s “energy sector,” which

crosses many industrial sectors. “Energy industries” are located in mining, manufacturing, transportation, wholesale trade and more; the “biotechnology industries” are located in agricultural services, manufacturing, research, testing laboratories and others. Research and publication papers should be reviewed closely to determine how the biotech numbers are defined.

A study by Ernst & Young defines biotech narrowly, limiting the industry to pharmaceuticals and research. Texas Health Care & Bioscience

Institute uses a broader definition that also includes medical devices. Other definitions for “biotechnology industries” include agricultural feedstock and chemicals, academic health centers, research hospitals and additional industry sectors. Because it is not a specific industry, biotechnology employment projections are not produced by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics—consequently, the numbers do not give us a good representation for where Biotech is headed.

To get a more specific look at biotechnology, one could review the data on the occupations considered to be specific to biotech: biochemists and biophysicists, biological technicians, microbiologists, biomedical engineers and others. The employment projections for these occupations are available. Of course these occupations are not the only ones within the biotech sectors. The staffing patterns of the industries will include computer programmers, technical writers, security guards, bookkeeping clerks and other occupations that one finds in any business.

For a closer look at the industries that could be included under a definition of biotechnology and at specific biotech occupations, comparisons and projected employment in the Gulf Coast region, see the full report under “labor market information/addition reports” at www.theworksource.org.

NURSING BLITZ PILOT PROGRAM 2003–2004

By Dana S. Smith, Nursing Program Manager Greater Houston Area Health Education Center

The Nursing Blitz Pilot Career Awareness Program for middle school students was created to introduce the nursing profession to area students and to increase the number of students choosing to pursue a career in nursing. This program, designed by the Greater Houston Area Health Education Center and funded through The WorkSource–Gulf Coast Workforce Board, involved the presentation of five programs.

The sessions focused on nursing careers and the steps necessary to pursue them. Nurses and health career guidance professionals presented the materials and engaged students in activities to help them learn facts about the nursing profession. More than 1,300 students participated, representing four Houston Independent School District middle schools. Nurses who volunteered represented 11 hospitals in the Houston area. While some hospitals supported this initiative by allowing nurses time to participate, others supported the effort by providing gifts and incentives for students. During the pilot year of the program, student levels of knowledge and interest in the nursing field increased. At the onset of the program, 5.4 percent of students indicated that they planned to become nurses; however by the last session, that

number had increased to 11.52 percent. In addition at the onset of the program, 28 percent of students admitted that they had at least thought about becoming nurses, and by the end, 40 percent of students said they would consider nursing as a career choice.



(1) Nurses participating in the career program at Edison Middle School, HISD, are (left to right): Olga Cantu, The Methodist Hospital; Melvin Priutt, DeBakey V.A. Medical Center; C.C. Monge, MD Anderson Hospital; and Merrilee Beazley, LBJ Hospital.



(2) Melvin Priutt from the DeBakey V.A. Medical Center