

St. Cloud to support bioscience initiative

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Area hopes to offer manufacturing, training for Minnesota tech industry

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St. Cloud hopes to play a role in Minnesota's evolving bioscience business initiative, an effort highlighted by a Friday meeting of education, government and business leaders.

While research sites will attract the heart of the industry to Rochester and the Twin Cities, St. Cloud can offer training programs and manufacturing sites, local leaders say.

Biosciences industry leaders on Friday visited Twin Cities campuses of the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development organized the "biosciences trade mission."

St. Cloud State University and St. Cloud Technical College are among the Mn-SCU institutions that could provide training for the emerging industry.

"When these companies get up and running, there will be a tremendous need for skilled workers," DEED

spokesman John Fisher said.

Dakota County Technical College, Rosemount, will launch a nanoscience technician program in August. Nanoscience and biosciences are converging, and training will attract industry, Dakota transportation and industry dean Mike Opp said.

St. Cloud State already offers bachelor's degrees in biotechnology and cell biology and a master's degree in cell and molecular biology.

A St. Cloud-area biosciences steering committee is hoping to attract new businesses to the area based on industry growth. Medical device manufacturers, for example, might be interested in the area even though research-related businesses are likely to locate near the University of Minnesota and Mayo Clinic campuses.

Reduced-tax zones, or Job Opportunity Building Zones, could help attract biosciences businesses, steering committee member Tom Moore said.