



# BioPark Thrives 5 Years After Opening

By Barry Rascovar

FIVE YEARS AFTER THE UNIVERSITY OF Maryland BioPark opened its doors, business is brisk—and it is becoming more collaborative.

Twenty-two tenants populate two large buildings west of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. There's so much interest from biotech startups (four more moved in this year) that the BioInnovation Center's lab space is at capacity.

A medical technology training program operates in the BioPark, thanks to a \$1.4 million federal grant. A part-time Master of Business Administration (MBA) program offered there by the University of Maryland, College Park's Robert H. Smith School of Business keeps the BioPark bustling at night.

Costing \$54 million including equipment, the Maryland Forensic Medical Center opened in a new BioPark bioscience structure in September. It is the nation's most modern medical examiner's building and offers intriguing partnership possibilities.

It's been a fast-paced year, says James L. Hughes, MBA, vice president for research and development at the University of Maryland (UM). "What's most exciting is seeing the interaction between the BioPark tenants and the campus. They have truly found each other."

"The BioPark is really, to me, a testimony to partnering," notes University President Jay A. Perman, MD. "We are committed to growing discoveries" in campus research buildings, and the discoveries then "will come to the marketplace" in the BioPark.

A prime example is the School of Medicine's Center for Vaccine Development's (CVD) research that has led to a promising vaccine for shigella, which causes 1.1 million deaths each year. CVD's oral vaccine has been licensed to PATH (Program for Appropriate Technology in Health), an international nonprofit group working on global health solutions, and the research is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Stage II human trials are being conducted by SNBL Clinical Pharmacology Center, the first tenant to occupy space in the BioPark. Paragon Bioservices, Inc., another BioPark company, is helping to manufacture the vaccine. Paragon is undergoing its second expansion since moving to the BioPark in 2008.

Hughes says: "It's great that we're teaming with Maryland companies and developing the vaccine right across the street from where it was discovered."

Another type of partnership is happening at the new Baltimore City Community College (BCCC) Life Sciences

Institute in the BioPark. It was created with the help of some UM alumni in Congress—Senators Barbara Mikulski, MSW '65, and Benjamin Cardin, JD '67, and U.S. Representative Elijah Cummings, JD '76—as well as Congressman C. A. Dutch Ruppberger, JD. The institute represents an innovative, cooperative arrangement between BCCC and the University to meet the region's growing biomedical and health science employment needs.

This two-year science program opens a variety of career pathways to local students. Pre-dental, pre-nursing, and pre-forensics programs are under discussion. The University and BioPark companies are offering internships and employment to students while in school and following graduation. This is part of the University's vision of the BioPark serving both as an educator and jobs generator for the local community.

The Smith School of Business' move into BioPark space, meanwhile, brings hundreds of part-time MBA students to the campus. Hughes says future opportunities exist for joint business degree programs with all of the University's professional schools.

The University also has been active helping BioPark startup companies obtain critically needed funding. Last summer, University staff alerted Fyodor Biotechnologies Corp., which is developing a diagnostic test for malaria, and Gliknik, Inc., which specializes in immune system drug therapies, to available state dollars. Within 48 hours, the BioPark companies submitted their proposals. The result: Fyodor and Gliknik each received \$200,000 state grants.

Proximity to University researchers sometimes plays a role in collaborations. Curt Civin, MD, director of the School of Medicine's Center for Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine, learned by chance that a BioPark firm, Biomere LLC, had an improved technology for growing human leukemia cells from genetically engineered mice.

Biomere's work dovetailed so well with Civin's own studies the two groups applied for a Small Business Technology Transfer grant last summer from the National Cancer Institute. Connecting BioPark companies with University researchers "can fill real needs here," Civin says.

"To move technology forward these days," Hughes observes, "you've got to have a partnership between the University and private companies."

But blending the two cultures poses challenges. Businesses "bring a different perspective to the research process," Hughes says. They are willing to pull the plug on unproductive research. This forces faculty "to focus on tangible results to drive the research."

Hughes recalls these cultures sometimes clashed after the BioPark opened in 2005. "Today, though, there is a greater understanding of the business discipline required."

And, Civin adds, the BioPark is an excellent recruiting tool for the University in the search for researchers "who are inventive and want to be entrepreneurial." ❖