

For Immediate Release:
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UMass Launches New Life Science Masters Degree initiative with Assistance from Sloan Foundation grant

*Ten Professional Science Masters Degrees Will Offer Internships
And Practical Business, Communication Skills*

BOSTON -- University of Massachusetts President Jack M. Wilson today announced a new initiative in the life sciences involving all five campuses in the system.

During the coming year, the UMass campuses will develop ten Professional Science Masters (PSM) degree programs that combine academic concentrations, industry experience and practical skills in business and communications. The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, a national leader in promoting higher education in science, has awarded the UMass system a \$124,200 grant to mount this effort. This has been matched by \$150,000 from the University and significant in-kind work.

“This initiative, developed under the leadership of UMass Lowell Provost Ahmed Abdelal and a system-wide steering committee, is another example of UMass’s commitment to support economic and work force development in Massachusetts – especially during these challenging times,” said Wilson.

“PSM programs provide scientists with the training needed not only to enter the work force in specific sectors of industry such as biotechnology or bio-manufacturing, but also the potential to advance subsequently to leadership positions in corporations,” said Abdelal.

The wide range of new PSM degree programs will include Applied Biotechnology; Biomedical Engineering and Biotechnology; Biosafety; Medical Lab Science; Environmental Services, Systems, and Technology; Marine Sciences; Project Management for Life Sciences; and Health Informatics. Animal Biotechnology and Biomedical Science; and Engineering and Integrative Life Sciences will be considered this fall as additional offerings.

Massachusetts Biotechnology Council President Robert K. Coughlin said that “this initiative is evidence of the strong commitment to the life sciences industry that UMass has demonstrated over the last several years. Our “Growing Talent” study and 2015 Strategic Report both call for this type of collaborative effort in order for Massachusetts to maintain its leadership position and properly prepare our future workforce for the life sciences industry. We will continue to work closely with UMass.”

The development of PSM degrees was one of the recommendations included in “Growing Talent,” a study of work force needs in the life sciences supported by the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center and the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council and conducted by the UMass Donahue Institute. Recognizing the strength of the life sciences industry as one of the strongest sectors in the Massachusetts economy, the study urges the creation of PSM degrees as a way to meet the critical work force need for experienced scientists.

“The Professional Science Masters degree program at UMass will help train the next generation of leaders for our state’s thriving life sciences super cluster,” said Dr. Susan Windham-Bannister, president of the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center.

The UMass PSM initiative directly addresses this need by combining the expertise of a substantial number of UMass faculty in life sciences and business with the ability to share online courses through the internationally recognized UMassOnline and a strong connection to the industry. As the initiative advances, UMass intends to develop PSM degrees in other areas critical to Massachusetts’ innovation economy.

The aim is to construct a unified, cost-effective model through which campuses build on their respective strengths in life sciences, course-sharing is readily accessible for students, internships are developed that offer valuable practical experience, and an employee advisory board is formed so that employers are actively engaged in shaping the curriculum to be responsive to industry needs and potentially recruit graduates as employees.

The UMass PSM Degree Programs in the Life Sciences will be tailored to meet the needs of four audiences: full-time employed or recently unemployed professionals; current undergraduates in science, technology, math or engineering (STEM) majors; students enrolled in traditional science Ph.D. programs who prefer to pursue advanced, applied professional training; and those who hold non-science degrees but seek further science and technical training directly applicable to a career change. Future employment opportunities for graduates include the life science industry as well as government agencies or non-government organizations.

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