



Daily News Clips

Grant will help CSUSM add master's degree blending science, business **North County Times 12/22/06**

By David Garrick

Plans to add a master's degree blending business and biotechnology at Cal State San Marcos got a financial boost this week from a national foundation.

The university is among 12 campuses in the 23-campus California State University system that will receive part of an \$891,000 grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. The San Marcos campus will receive roughly \$50,000 to develop the new master's program, officials said.

The grant aims to help universities establish master's programs that inject business principles into math, science and engineering course work. The CSU system is the first state university in the nation to launch the Professional Science Master's Degree program on multiple campuses.

Cal State San Marcos hopes to launch its master's degree combining biotechnology and business courses during the 2009-10 school year, according to Al Kern, the university's associate dean of extended studies. The two-year program is slated to begin with 15 to 20 students, he said.

"We want to prepare students steeped in science, but also prepared for the business world and issues such as intellectual property," Kern said Thursday. "We are excited about participating in this new type of degree."

The university added an undergraduate biotechnology program three years ago, and plans for a master's degree in the subject have been tweaked recently to include a focus on business.

"With San Diego among the leading regions in the nation for biotechnology, we think this program makes sense for the community and our industry partners," said Kern.

Those partners include Invitrogen in Carlsbad, Genentech in Oceanside and several smaller biotech firms in the area, he said. "We are trying to prepare students for careers, not just jobs," said Kern.

Many details of the new master's program are still being determined, said Kern. In addition to biotechnology, there will also be a focus on bioinformatics ---- the management and analysis of biological data, said Kern.

The program will also include significant cooperation between campuses, with some online courses and joint projects. Students from San Diego State will likely work with students on the San Marcos campus Kern said.

The amount of the grant received by the San Marcos campus will hinge on how quickly plans for the program move forward, said Kern.

"We have to decide how aggressive we are going to be," said Kern. "The faster we move, the more we will get."

A portion of the money will be spent on marketing, he said.

"This is not understood too well as a new degree," said Kern.

But the university is confident it will have enough students to launch the program, and that it may grow in future years, said Kern. Surveys of students and industry have consistently shown strong support for hybrid master's degrees combining science and business.

The university will not need to hire extra professors for the program, Kern said, because the College Business already has qualified instructors for the business component. However, the university will likely employ guest lecturers from biotech firms, he said.

Charles Reed, chancellor of the CSU system, said the Sloan grant will have an impact on the state's economy by allowing graduate science programs to grow more quickly.

"These programs supply the labor market with highly skilled workers that are essential to the state's future economy," said Reed.