

## High school will offer biomanufacturing classes

Skills » Classes will prepare students for jobs, higher ed

By Lisa Schencker  
The Salt Lake Tribune

Salt Lake Tribune

Updated: 04/26/2009 07:13:33 AM MDT

High school is no longer just about reading, writing and 'rithmetic.

Soon it will also be about biomanufacturing. The Granite Technical Institute is gearing up to offer the state's first biomanufacturing education program for high school students this fall. The idea is to give students an edge when it comes to getting jobs after high school or pursuing education in the field, which focuses on manufacturing everything from dietary supplements to pharmaceuticals to medical devices.

"It's a growing industry," said Jelena Jensen, who will co-teach the class in the fall. "There are jobs going unfilled, and they are high paying jobs."

And some are jobs that could potentially be filled by students right out of high school. Jensen said entry-level biomanufacturing jobs often start at anywhere from \$10 to \$14 an hour depending on the job and employee's skill level.

They're jobs that require knowledge of not only manufacturing but federal regulations and tracking procedures, said Sandra Hemmert, a Granite career and technical education specialist.

"Manufacturing now isn't just sitting there assembling widgets with your hands," Jensen said. "They need people with some really high-tech skills."

For example, students will learn how to use a plastic injection molder -- a giant blue and green machine in the school's prototyping lab -- to make plastic parts for medical devices. They'll use computer-aided design to create 3-D models. Other lab rooms will be filled with microscopes so students can learn how to do quality control by looking at products up close. They'll use biosafety cabinets and chemical fume hoods to test and mix liquids and chemicals.

They'll use a real clean room -- a sterile room meant to limit contamination of products -- just like they might in the professional world.

The classes will be offered through both the Granite Technical Institute and Salt Lake Community College (SLCC). In fact, the first college class is already being offered this semester. And Granite Technical officials aim to offer the high school classes next year as concurrent enrollment classes, meaning students could get both high school and college credit.

Students who take certain classes will be able to leave high school with a biomanufacturing certificate of completion. With that, they could get entry-level jobs or continue taking classes through SLCC in hopes of earning a biomanufacturing diploma or even, eventually, an applied associates degree.

SLCC student Maggie Finnegan, who works as a cashier and is taking the class this semester, wishes biomanufacturing had been offered when she was in high school.

"It's a good opportunity," Finnegan said between discussions with her class Tuesday about a case-study involving peanut products contaminated with salmonella. "It's interesting work, and there are a lot of interesting things going on in the industry."

Students will also have the opportunity to work directly with professionals. As part of the Workforce Innovations in Regional Economic Development initiative (WIRED), start-up companies will be recruited through the Utah Science Technology and Research (USTAR) initiative to share lab space and equipment at the school. The idea is to help promote business in Utah while giving students real-world experience.

"We're hoping those start up companies will benefit from gaining access to some of the equipment, and also they would be able to provide some kind of training [to students]," said Vivian Ngan-Winward, director of SLCC's biomanufacturing program.

The entire program at the technical institute will soon be fully up and running thanks partly to a nearly \$2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, Ngan-Winward said.

Hemmert said the program will likely be able to serve 40 to 80 students in the fall.

"There's a future in it," Jensen said of biomanufacturing. "Whether the economy is good or bad, people still need health care."

[lschencker@sltrib.com](mailto:lschencker@sltrib.com)

What is Granite Technical Institute?

Granite Technical Institute, 2500 S. State St., in South Salt Lake, offers career and technical education classes and concurrent enrollment classes to students throughout the Granite School District.

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