

13 receive certificates in New Bedford High School Biotech Lab training program

Students, staff and guests gathered today at New Bedford High School's state-of-the-art Biotech Lab to celebrate the first graduating class of the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center High School Apprenticeship Challenge. 13 students make up the first class of the specialized training program, which prepares them for lab internships and jobs in research, science and industry.

Receiving Certificates of Completion: Yousef Ahmed, Corelys Santiago Cruz, Ana Curry, Jacelina Goncalves, Jaqueline Le, Annie Lin, Kiara Monteiro, Katherine Papas, Dhruvi Patel, Tevany Spencer, Esmeralda Barea Velez, Christopher Villard, and Jun Zhang.

The Biotech Lab opened in May 2018, made possible by a \$110,000 grant from the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center (MLSC). In March 2019, NBHS was enabled to implement the training program, thanks to an additional MLSC grant of \$40,000. The lab is a university-caliber training facility furnished with the latest biotechnology equipment, tools and supplies.



Speakers at the event included Thomas Anderson, NBPS Superintendent; Bernadette Coelho, NBHS Headmaster; Beth Nicklas, MLSC General Counsel and Vice President for Academic & Workforce Programs; Tracie Ferreira, Associate Professor, Bioengineering , University of Massachusetts Dartmouth; Brian McCauley, NBHS teacher; and students Ana Curry and Katherine Papas.

Superintendent Anderson congratulated the students on their completion of the 9-week program and the challenging subject matter and multifaceted laboratory techniques they were required to master. He expressed the thanks of the district and city for the MLSC and UMD partnerships that have made the lab and the training program a reality for NBHS students.

Headmaster Coelho commended students as the first class to graduate from the program, and noted that paid internship opportunities at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth are available this summer. She recognized the program's teachers and staff, including Mr. Kolbeck, Mr. Cohen, Ms. Bonner, Mr. McCauley, Ms. Cost, and Ms. Martinez, Graduation Facilitator.

Beth Nicklas noted that the MLSC mission is “to support the life sciences, including biopharmaceutical companies, biotech, medical device, and research that will lead to cures and therapies, and to better outcomes for diseases. So this is special work. We need all of you to contribute to it, if this is your passion. There are lots of opportunities in this state.” She added “Our funding helps provide the equipment, but the real energy here comes from you, your instructors, your teachers and your passion and excitement for learning.”

In her congratulatory remarks, Dr. Ferreira noted to graduates “There are so many applications for the skill set that you’ve learned here. The great thing about biotechnology is that there are a lot of life science initiatives and diseases to solve. And while you may not all become physicians or go into disease management; there’s also going to be all the environmental applications that will help make the world a better place; for example, through work in areas such as energy-sustaining biofuel production.”



Students Ana Curry and Katherine Papas related their experiences with the program. “We’ve gained many different skills in the lab and gained knowledge of new concepts that

have helped us in other areas such as our AP courses. We also improved our ability to work in teams because this lab is a very collaborative setting.”

During the reception that followed, students discussed their research projects, which they had been working on since mid-April. Displayed on large-format posters around the lab, the team projects include 454 DNA Sequencing, Transformation by Electroporation, CRISPR-Cas9, and Polymerase Chain Reaction.

About the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center

The Massachusetts Life Sciences Center is an economic development and investment agency dedicated to supporting the growth and development of the life sciences in Massachusetts, home to the most verdant and productive life sciences ecosystem in the world. Through public-private funding initiatives, MLSC supports innovation, research & development, commercialization, and manufacturing activities in the fields of biopharma, medical device, diagnostics, and digital health.

About the MLSC High School Apprenticeship Challenge

The MLSC High School Apprenticeship Challenge is an innovative after-school program that provides students with laboratory training and offers them the opportunity to apply for lab-based internships at renowned research institutions and life sciences companies. The 9-week program is designed to increase students’ skills and content knowledge so they can progress into a successful summer internship in a life science company or academic lab.