

Biopharm industry touts strong results in weak state economy

By KRISTEN HANMER
Gazette staff writer

A report commissioned by the biopharmaceutical industry shows while other sectors may be struggling in the current economic environment, pharmaceutical research and biotechnology companies have continued to benefit the economy and have the potential for long-term growth that could help improve the state's fiscal footing.

"Our study does show that the industry, while not recession proof, has proven to be more recession resistant than other industries," said Nancy Bergsteinson, director of Archstone Consulting, the company that prepared the report. "The forces at work that drive the expansion of this industry go beyond the factors of the economy as a whole. The biopharmaceutical industry is an idea and innovation industry."

The report, titled Economic Impact of the Biopharmaceutical Sector on New York State and commissioned by the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America and the New York Biotechnology Association, shows from 1996 to 2006 the biopharmaceutical industry grew across all measures. According to the report, the industry's employment growth rate was 1.8 percent, compared to 0.8 percent for other sectors in the state. Bergsteinson said although it is too early to analyze the data from 2008, it appears the trends from 2006 at least carried over into 2007.

Nathan Tinker, executive director for NYBA, said, "This report really speaks to the vitality of this industry, which I think has been a traditionally undervalued and under-recognized sector of New York state's economy, but one that is producing jobs, one that is creating tax revenues and one that has enormous potential for economic development."

Ken Johnson, senior vice president of PhRMA, argued the strength of the industry, one that could provide new developments and advances in health care, shows it could serve as a key factor in helping drive the state out of its current economic recession. He said continued investment could prove to be a "huge economic shot in the arm."

Johnson also said providing the opportunity for continued research and development for new ways to fight and prevent, rather than just treat, chronic



Gazette photo by Anand Balasar
A study released by biopharmaceutical associations says while other sectors of the economy may be struggling, the biopharmaceutical industry is going strong and may serve to benefit the economy. SUNY Board of Trustees Chair Carl Hayden, seen here, says the report made a persuasive argument for investing in the industry, and the state university system should be involved in the industry's research and development efforts.

diseases would, in turn, benefit other areas of the economy.

"We don't have a health care system in America," he said. "We have a sick care system. We treat people after they've become sick." He noted 75 cents of every \$1 spent in health care goes toward treating chronic diseases, translating to roughly \$20 billion annually in the state of New York. And, with \$69 billion in "lost productivity" from treating diseases, Johnson said treatment costs in the state amount to nearly \$90 billion annually.

"If we could take a part of that \$90 billion and plow that back into building roads and bridges and putting people back to work again, wouldn't that be such a better use of the money?" he asked.

The organizations also say investment in the industry translates into increased jobs and revenues within the state. Bergsteinson said every job in the biopharmaceutical industry helps support 3.7 jobs in the broader economy.

In 2006, the industry employed 55,446 workers and with indirect jobs taken into account as well, was responsible for a total of 130,464 jobs. In the same year, companies in the industry paid \$3.8 billion in wages to their direct workers and generated \$845.6 million in federal and Social Security taxes and \$121 million in state taxes.

Other organizations voiced their support for the industry at a press conference on April 27.

Carl Hayden, chair of the State University of New York Board of Trustees, said, "The future belongs to those states and those nations who best succeed in creating, nurturing and commercializing intellectual capital. That's what biopharmaceutical research is like and that's why SUNY needs to be involved in any effort that will push forward the frontiers of science in this area."

Mark Amodeo, director of governmental affairs for the Business Council of New York State, also said it

was vital to recognize the importance of the industry as the state prepares to recover economically. "New York is well positioned to see this industry grow and flourish," said Amodeo. "We have a strong base, we have a university system, a research system and we have a workforce that is needed to support this growth."

"What is equally important," Amodeo said, "is policymakers understand and make that connection to how important this is to New York's economy. We need a public policy environment that nurtures innovation and encourages and promotes this kind of investment in New York."

Johnson said, "It's important to remind legislators at every opportunity of the importance of innovation in America. Finance drives innovation and innovation drives the economy. If we're going to get out of this mess, and ensure long-term economic prosperity, we're literally going to have to innovate our way out of it."

UUP elects Smith to full term

By MATTHEW ARCO
Gazette staff writer

The United University Professions has elected President Phillip Smith to his first full two-year term.

Smith, of Manlius, Onondaga County, is on leave from State University of New York Upstate Medical University in Syracuse where he serves as a professor of cell developmental biology. He has been involved with the union for 28 years, according to UUP. He served in numerous leadership positions at both local and statewide levels.



Smith

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Advocates hope time is right for expanded EC laws

By KATRINA KIELTYKA
Gazette staff writer

A few weeks ago, if a 17-year-old wanted to obtain emergency contraception, he or she would have needed a prescription and government-issued identification to get it, while those 18 or older were able to obtain it over the counter. As of April 22, due to a March federal ruling, the FDA has lowered the age restrictions to include 17-year-olds, but younger women still face stipulations women's health advocates say create barriers if they're looking to prevent a pregnancy.

In order to expand these young women's access to emergency contraception, advocates have been working to pass a pair of bills that would make it more readily available for young women and college-age students.

Commonly known as the morning after pill, emergency contraception can prevent pregnancy when taken up to 72 hours after sexual intercourse, according to the state Department of Health. Plan B, the only type of emergency contraception currently being sold in the

United States, was approved for over-the-counter sale by the Food and Drug Administration for women and men 18 or older in 2006.

The Unintended Pregnancy Prevention Act proposes that women and men of any age be able to obtain emergency contraception over the counter for self-administration from a pharmacist or a registered nurse without a patient-specific prescription.

Proponents of the act say the pill could prove extremely effective at reducing the numbers of women seeking abortion. In a memorandum of support of the act, The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, District II/NY said the use of emergency contraception "could prevent as many as 1.7 million of the approximately 3 million unintended pregnancies that occur each year in the United States, including as many as 800,000 pregnancies that now result in abortion."

But according to advocates, the current FDA restrictions on obtaining emergency contraception create barriers for underage women and those who

cannot provide a pharmacist with a government-issued ID. "Unfortunately, obtaining a prescription from a licensed prescriber is not always practical or possible, particularly during the evenings or over a weekend when traditional medical offices are closed," ACOG's memorandum said. The organization also argues that because the pill is only effective for up to 72 hours after sexual intercourse and is most effective when taken 12 to 24 hours after, "timely access to emergency contraception is essential for women of all reproductive age."

"We don't have age limits on other contraceptives or barrier methods," said Tracey Brooks, president and CEO of Family Planning Advocates of New York State. "Using emergency contraception is the same as taking the pill, using condoms or Depo-Provera."

Brooks noted that "there's broad support for emergency contraception nationally," and many see it as "common sense care."

Another reason it should be available

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