

My name is Sam Mahdi, and I am a grad student from UConn. We are starting an outreach program here at UConn where the grad students would go to low income high schools and conduct various workshops to expose/get them interested in science. This involves teaching them basic lab skills, as well as potentially bringing them to the research labs on campus for a summer internship (there are programs that bring high schoolers as well as undergrads to the labs, but these are usually schools in affluent neighborhoods that have the funding that enables them to do this).

What I wanted to do was to set up a side program branching off from this, that focuses more on getting high schools prepared/eligible for getting a job in science. Getting a career in science requires a lot of time and money however, and unfortunately, many of these students don't even consider science as a profession simply due to the high barrier of entry. I want to get these students interested in science, but I also understand that due to their financial situations and life situations, they don't have the luxury of pursuing such a path. My goal is to provide an opportunity for these students that they otherwise might never get, to provide them with the opportunity of getting into the biotech industry, and by extension, into science.

The basic idea was to start Junior to Senior year, and teach them skills that are critical for entry level biotech positions (e.g. QC, Manufacturing, Marketing, etc.). This would involve teaching them both GMP and FDA regulations and practices, how to read/write protocols, basic analytical techniques both theoretical and practical, core basics like pipetting, maintaining scientific lab notebooks, etc. Once they've obtained these skills, I'm looking to hopefully even get some summer internships if possible.

The reason I am emailing you regarding this is I need to determine if companies would hire these students. I understand a degree is very important, and these students would only have a diploma. That being said, I also understand most undergrads lack practical wet lab experience and the knowledge of how the industry operates. I don't have access to any companies, nor know people who work in biotech here in New England. I was hoping, if possible, you could get me into contact with some of the people in these biotech companies that are responsible for hiring applicants for entry level positions in manufacturing or QC. I was also curious if you were aware of any non-profit organizations that have a similar outreach program in Boston (or if your organization has a branch regarding this). It would be a lot easier to create an extension to a program here than start a new program from scratch.

Thank you,
Sincerely,

Sam Mahdi