

THE BUFFALO NEWS

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Bio center a huge win for Buffalo

For city too often accused of losing, this facility shows how it's done right

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Sharon Cantillon/Buffalo News
Dr. Bruce Holm, executive director, and Norma Nowak, director of science and technology, outside the new Center of Excellence in Bioinformatics and Life Sciences in the medical corridor at Ellicott and Virginia streets.

Dreams do become reality, and it's especially nice when the dreams are big and the potential rewards are enormous. Reality arrived here last week with the opening of the University at Buffalo's New York State Center of Excellence in Bioinformatics and Life Sciences, changing Buffalo's future.

The new \$52 million UB center is one of three major new buildings on a downtown medical research campus that involves a partnership of institutions that promises to shape the image and the economy of this city for decades to come. The Roswell Park Cancer Institute Center for Genetics and Pharmacology opened the same day, joining the still-new Hauptman-Woodward Medical Research Institute facility. This is major progress, folks, and people ought to realize it.

Together, the biotech research complex at Virginia and Ellicott streets is no small investment in the future. Some \$225 million in state, federal and private-sector money has gone into this bet on Buffalo, which development groups expect to add 7,000 to 8,000 jobs - many of them occupied by nationally respected researchers - over the next eight years. Even more importantly, the center is expected to make a huge

contribution to health research and the search for cures.

It didn't just happen. Forging the partnerships, capturing the vision and turning it into the bricks and mortar of a synergistic laboratory complex took years of work. Gov. George E. Pataki led a state effort that invested nearly \$90 million in this Center of Excellence, with strong support from the local state delegation. Several speakers at the opening ceremonies credited Rep. Thomas M. Reynolds with pushing hard to land nearly \$28 million in direct federal aid for a project that isn't even in his district, and Sens. Hillary Rodham Clinton and Charles E. Schumer also provided strong backing.

But the major creativity and center-building stems from UB. Center Executive Director Bruce A. Holm built the 200-person staff that now has moved into the new structure. UB President John B. Simpson expanded the entire concept from bioinformatics - supercomputer analysis of genetic data and molecular structure in quest of new medical drugs - into a broader scale of life sciences research. Buffalo should gain from this timely investment in its job base, its economy and its image. This moment is well worth celebrating.

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