

Survey: Iowa biotech job prospects dim

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By JIM OFFNER, jim.offner@wfcourier.com | Posted: Wednesday, June 2, 2010 1:30 am | (3) Comments

WATERLOO - Multi-pronged marketing efforts of the Cedar Valley TechWorks evidently haven't reached Iowa's college students, if a new survey is any indication.

A new poll of college students revealed many think they will have to leave the state to find employment in the biotechnology sector.

"The purpose for doing the survey was to kind of get a first-hand pulse," said Doug Getter, executive director of the Des Moines-based Iowa Biotechnology Association, which conducted the first-ever survey of 700 students at five Iowa universities and junior colleges and released the results Thursday.

Nearly half of biotech students want to stay in Iowa, but 23 percent said they think the outlook for finding a job in the state was "not favorable." Thirty-three percent said they will look for the best job wherever they can find it.

The lesson is not lost on TechWorks, which currently has one tenant - the University of Northern Iowa's National Ag-Based Lubricants Center - on the edge of downtown Waterloo, said Cary Darrah, TechWorks' general manager.

"We'd love to have the names of all those respondents," Darrah said. "We're in the business of creating jobs for that audience."

The survey polled students from the University of Northern Iowa, Iowa State, Des Moines Area Community College and Buena Vista University in Storm Lake.

"I think from the results of the survey, the conclusion statewide is, no, they don't know about it," Getter said.

The survey asked students if they felt the state was doing enough to encourage students to stay in the health-care and science professions. Forty-three percent had "no opinion" and 36 percent said "no."

The results offered at least some salve, Darrah said.

"The number of students in the field is very encouraging," Darrah said.