

# The Des Moines Register

SATURDAY, AUGUST 27, 2011 | THE NEWS IOWA DEPENDS ON | ON THE WEB AND YOUR MOBILE AT DESMOINESREGISTER.COM | 75c | METRO EDITION

## Iowa looks for bioscience businesses

Leaders discuss hurdles to attracting companies and retaining workers.

By **DONNELLE ELLER**

Iowa wants more people like Doug Bartels, a research scientist who returned to his home state to join a startup after stints on each coast.

It also wants the fast-growing company that bought Bartels' startup and is now building a new \$800 million headquarters in Boston and adding 500 jobs.

"Boston has that nexus" — large research universities, leading scientists and abundant venture capital, said Paul Begala, a national political commentator and panel moderator in Ankeny on Friday. "How do you replicate that in Iowa?"

It's a question Iowans have asked for years: How does the state tap deep research strengths in human health at the University of Iowa and animal health at Iowa State University to attract bioscience businesses, investment and jobs?

Bioscience and medical leaders from across Iowa and the nation discussed the issue Friday at Des Moines Area Community College at the Medical Innovation Summit. Leaders discussed hurdles to attracting venture capital, pushing technology from universities, financing research with tightening state and federal budgets, and training, attracting and retaining talented science and technology workers.

ISU President Gregory Geoffroy, a panelist, pointed to Laboratorias Hipra's planned \$90 million investment to build a U.S. headquarters in Ames as an example of Iowa's successful efforts to attract bioscience jobs. The Spanish veterinary pharmaceutical company plans to begin

construction in the fall. It will create 75 jobs.

"We've had great successes based on investments we've made" in Iowa, said Geoffroy, who also pointed to \$39.4 million in royalties generated from the development of a lead-free solder used to make cellphones, computers and other electronics as a successful example of technology transfer. The money is shared by ISU and its partners as well as the researchers.

U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Ia., who hosted Friday's event, said national leaders have

Harkin, citing a Battelle Institute study, said the federal government's \$3.8 billion investment in mapping the human genome has created a \$796 billion economic impact over the past decade. "In 2010 alone, the genomic revolution generated \$67 billion in U.S. economic output and created 310,000 jobs," Harkin said.

John Orloff, chief medical officer at Novartis Pharma, agreed: "Medical innovation is key to 21st century knowledge-based economy, it's essential to job growth ... and it has the potential to lower costs."

Chris Coburn, executive director of Cleveland Clinic Innovations, said the corporate venture company has created 35 spinoff companies that raised more than \$450 million. "We're at the crescendo of harvesting new technologies.

"From an economic development standpoint, we have two companies closing in on 100 employees each, and for mature economies like in Ohio and Iowa, that's a big deal," he said.

Medical innovation "is everything you want for improving people's lives but also providing enduring employment," Coburn said.

Bartels, senior research scientist at Massachusetts-based Vertex, said he sees the biosciences growing. Vertex purchased Quorum Biosciences of Coralville in 2001. The company employs nine in Iowa and about 1,800 globally. "I live in Iowa, work in research and hope I represent many others," he said.

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focused on the deficit when they should be focused on jobs, especially high-paying bioscience positions. He said it holds tremendous potential for Iowa.

"The No. 1 issue facing the nation is not the deficit crisis," said Harkin. "It's a job crisis. We have no more important challenge than boosting America's global competitiveness to create jobs and opportunities. And one critically important way to do that is by investing in scientific discovery and research."

"Basic research is not a luxury," he said. "It's not discovery for the sake of discovery, but for better health and saving lives."