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Wisconsin Brews Big Bio Effort (cover)

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State builds on stem cell and other technologies.

Tom Primiano liked Wisconsin's initiatives to foster biotech growth so much he packed up his start-up company, **Clonex Development**, from Chicago and moved it 145 miles (233 km.) northwest to Madison, the acknowledged epicenter of Wisconsin's biotech sector.

"There's a concerted effort by the government, universities and private firms to foster start ups," says, Primiano, who founded his company in 2000. "The Governor [Jim Doyle] proposed US\$750 million to develop biotech and we

got a piece of that to move up here and hit the ground running. There were no similar types of investments available in Illinois. There's a great stem cell presence here in Madison, and our technology can be translated from the current types of cells we use to stem cells."

Clonex uses genetic engineering to boost production of therapeutic proteins. It recently signed a deal to work with Amgen.

"We use our genetic engineering technology to, as an example, aid manufacturers of insulin to allow them to produce more insulin and reduce their costs on the market," Primiano says.

Another biotech firm receiving state assistance for expansion is **EraGen Biosciences**. The company, which develops and markets diagnostic technologies, is upgrading its manufacturing capacity and creating 75 jobs.

Just south of Madison, in Fitchburg, the second phase of the New Venture Center on the Fitchburg Technology Campus is under way. The 46,000-sq.-ft. (4,300-sq.-m.) first phase is full with companies such as Platypus Technologies, a developer of nanotechnologies for the life sciences. Imago Scientific, another nanotech company, is set to be the anchor of the similarly sized second phase. Imago develops nanoscale analytical instruments.

University of Wisconsin-Madison is one of the pioneering centers of stem cell research through the work of anatomy professor James Thomson. Now Gov. Doyle is pushing the state to capitalize on that foundation to promote economic development.

In his latest state of the state address, Doyle urged recruitment of stem cell technology companies as part of an effort to brand the state as the stem cell leader. He set a state goal of garnering 10 percent of the projected market by 2015, when some estimates say the stem cell market could reach



EraGen Biosciences is one of the many growing biotech firms in the Madison area.

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\$10 billion.

The state's biotech stature was further buoyed with the recent pronouncement by online publisher FierceBiotech that the state has put together one of the top biotech recruiting efforts.

"Wisconsin probably has more true biotech companies than any other Midwestern state," says Jim Leonhart, executive director of the Wisconsin Biotechnology and Medical Device Association. Leonhart says there are nearly 300 biotech firms operating in Wisconsin and their revenues exceeded \$7 billion in 2005.

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