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## AZ delegation participates in world's largest biotech conference

By Kyle Schliesman  
 Posted: Thursday, Dec 23, 2004 - 02:54:00 pm MST

*Inside Tucson Business*

Later this month, Tucson representatives will pitch Arizona as the perfect place for biotechnology businesses at an upcoming national conference, said to be the biggest bio-industry gathering in history.

The Biotechnology Industry Organization annual convention (BIO 2003) will be June 22-25 in Washington, D.C. BIO represents more than 1,000 biotechnology companies, academic institutions, state biotechnology centers and related organizations. The first BIO convention was held in 1993. Since then participation has grown tenfold. Last year's event featured 15,000 industry professionals and 500 journalists from 52 countries.

Again, the organization anticipates upwards of 20,000 participants. The event will include 25 tracks of programming, 345,000 square feet of exhibit space and 2,500 partnering meetings for 236 company and organization presentations.

An Arizona delegation plans to draw attention through its booth, which will depict a mountainous scene.

"When you walk in, it's going to be very eye-catching," said Steve Taylor, associate vice president of corporate relations for Greater Tucson Economic Council. "It's going to draw a lot of attention to Arizona. I think people will come to the booth just to come to the booth, then they are going to find out all about the biotech industry in Arizona."

The Arizona booth will include three tables for individual presentations of northern, central and southern Arizona. The Tucson table will include information on Tucson, Bio-Industry Organization of Southern Arizona and other local companies and organizations. Bio-SA will present specific company information for some of its members, including Ventana Medical Systems.

Raphael Gruener, the UA tech park's Scientist in Residence, helped design the Arizona booth and put together the presentations for Tucson and Arizona.

Besides GTEC, the Arizona delegation to the conference will include Tucson representatives from the University of Arizona and the Bio-SA, which represents the local bio-technology cluster. The UA Science and Technology Park also is heavily involved in the program. The delegation will include representatives from the Phoenix and Flagstaff areas, as well.

Through this event, local representatives can market Tucson and Arizona as an ideal location for relocation and/or biotechnology partnerships. The Tucson representatives will likely have a chance to meet with delegations from all over the United States, Canada and Europe.

"If we are not there, then we're not in the game," said Michael Cusanovich, director of the Bio-SA. "You need to have a presence and indicate that you are interested and you have some things to offer or, as people look to relocate or

Feb 23, 2005

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look for investment opportunities, they are not going to think about you."

One of the major events at the conference will be a Bioethics Roundtable featuring prominent scientists, religious and secular ethicists, researchers, thought leaders and patients. The event, entitled "Scientific Exploration: Should there be Limits?" will feature a discussion about scientific discoveries and ethical boundaries.

"With the completion of the human genome and other scientific breakthroughs announced daily, it is important that we take a look at where biotechnology is headed," said Michael Werner, vice president of bioethics at BIO. "Scientific exploration has taken giant leaps in recent years and will continue to advance at a rapid pace. The scientific community must recognize the ethical implications of these discoveries and discuss them openly with the public."

GTEC and the University of Arizona will sponsor a reception on the evening of June 23 to introduce Tucson and the university to interested parties from around the world. Bruce Wright, chief operating officer for the UA Science and Technology Park, will participate in another event prior to the BIO event. The Association of University Research Parks will hold a pre-conference called Bio-Parks 2003. That event will be June 20-21. The event will focus on the facility and laboratory requirements of the bio-tech industry and how those elements can be incorporated into a research park.

"I think we are right on the edge of seeing significant activity in developing a biotechnology industry in our state," Wright said. "There is a lot of research going on and we're seeing a large number of faculty disclosures and that will eventually lead to startup companies."

For more information about this event, visit [www.bio.org](http://www.bio.org). For more information about the local cluster group, visit [www.bio-sa.org](http://www.bio-sa.org).

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