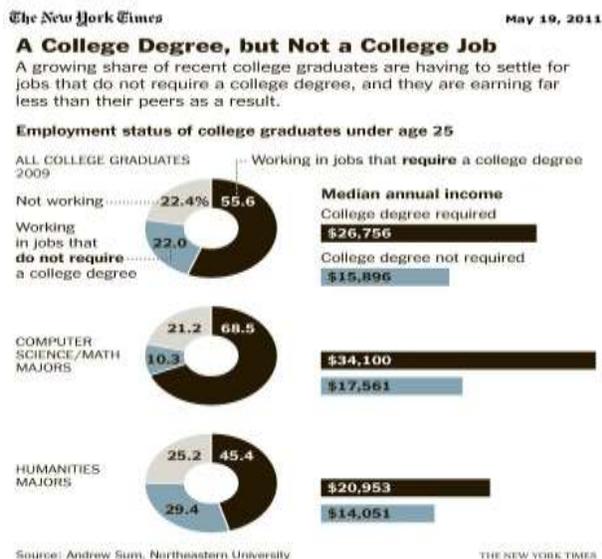


America's Innovation Corps: A recommendation to the Office of Science & Technology Policy for harnessing biological research innovations to meet national challenges while creating high-wage, high-skill jobs.

The New Jersey Community College Consortium for Workforce & Economic Development (19 NJ public community colleges with 65 campus locations serving almost 400,000 NJ residents annually) in partnership with BioNJ (representing New Jersey's biotech and life science employers) and the New Jersey Business and Industry Association (the nation's largest employer member organization with over 22,000 member NJ companies) teamed with Innovation America on the development last month of **America's Innovation Corps**; "a plan to create up to 400,000 full time jobs for unemployed and under employed recent college graduates, America's next generation of knowledge workers."

We are pleased to have this opportunity to respond (October 11, 2011) to the OSTP request for "recommendations for harnessing biological research innovations to meet national challenges in health, food, energy and the environment while creating high-wage, high-skill jobs." We propose that the Office of Science & Technology Policy incorporate the **America's Innovation Corps** concept in the development of a "National Bioeconomy Blueprint" and offer to immediately institute a pilot in New Jersey. We believe that doing so will better leverage our investments in biological research and development to immediately employ unemployed and under employed recent college graduates in the biotech, life science and biohealth industry providing valuable experience and access to bioscience careers of the future and improvement in the lives of all Americans.

THE PROBLEM: Over 20% of recent college graduates are unemployed. Unfortunately, recent college graduates do not generally qualify for federal/state unemployment benefits. In addition, many of the recent college graduates who have secured employment are working part-time or in (50%) of the jobs that do not require a college education.



The Solution: A practical solution to provide meaningful employment for up to 400,000 unemployed or under employed recent college graduates by creating employment opportunities in innovative and high growth businesses including biohealth, bioscience and life sciences (a designated NJ Key Industry Sector).

OVERVIEW: In the U.S. today, there are over 2 million private businesses and approximately 17,000 public companies that have economic and growth challenges and are reluctant to hire in this uncertain economic time (3,100 NJ biotech & life science employers with just over 100,000 employees). There are also 13.1 million

unemployed individuals in the US that need and want to go to work (over 400,000 in NJ), including 5.1 million college graduates.

THE PROPOSED PROGRAM: A plan to place qualified college graduates in full time jobs with growing small employers utilizing existing resources. The program will be administered at the state level using New Jersey as the pilot through public community colleges, public 4-year colleges and graduate universities to recruit candidates, link to local employers and fiscally manage the program. A federal agency with existing ties to institutions of higher education and an established funding mechanism in place will be engaged and given program oversight responsibilities. An example, which has been recently launched, is the Innovation Corps (I-Corps) program of the National Science Foundation. The goal of the I-Corps program is to connect NSF-funded scientific research with the technological, entrepreneurial and business communities to help create a stronger national ecosystem. The result is innovation to couple scientific discovery with technology development and societal needs. Other federal agencies such as Labor, Commerce, NIH and Education also have established mechanisms to fund higher education institutions.

The program will provide unemployed and under employed recent college graduates a meaningful and innovative employment experience. They will have the opportunity to learn about and participate in the process of transforming and harnessing scientific and engineering discoveries into innovative applications to solving problems in bioscience. Members of the private sector—including technology developers, entrepreneurs, business leaders, venture capitalists, and others from private industry—will provide critical support of this effort as mentors in partnership with participating college faculty.

Implementation & Budget: The pilot initiative will include the 19 New Jersey community colleges and 3 public colleges and universities over 18 months. This will provide a 6 to 12 month **America's Innovation Corps** job experience for up to 1,800 recent unemployed or under employed graduates with local New Jersey bioscience employers. At the national level this would be replicated to include up to 2,000 community colleges and universities and as many as 400,000 recently unemployed or under employed college graduates.

The participating community colleges and universities will assign faculty mentors to work with each of the **America's Innovation Corps** participants and local bioscience, life science and bio-health employers. The program's focus will be on small growth employers of less than 250 employees. The participants will be full-time employees of the participating employers for a period of 6-18 months with salary subsidy and offered full-time unsubsidized employment at the program's conclusion.

Make no mistake about it, the individual participants will be full-time although temporary employees of the participating local employers during the 6 - 18 month program period. In addition to their full-time employment duties at each company, the participants under the direction of faculty and employers will also be assigned to solve a specific business or science problem identified as important to the employer's goals. The research and innovation outcome will be a part of the participants work tasks and documented in a published report to the employers, faculties and key stakeholders by *Innovation America*.

Anticipating that the vast majority of participants will become full-time employees upon completion of the 6-18 month subsidized employment period, we propose that local participating employers that hire **America's Innovation Corps** participants on a full time

basis, would be eligible to receive a wage tax credit of 50% of each individual's annual wages if that individual is retained as a full time employee for an additional 12 months following the America's Innovation Corps project job experience.

The pilot in New Jersey will cost approximately \$50 million over 18 months employing up to 1,800 recent unemployed and under employed NJ college graduates. Once implemented at the national level, the cost would be approximately \$3 billion. It is anticipated that each participant would be employed at an annual salary of approximately \$50,000 plus benefits with a one time wage grant subsidy of up to \$25,000 per participant. The federal funds would be matched by a like or greater amount in-kind from the participating employers as salary and benefits.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES:

- Nationally as many as 400,000 unemployed or under employed recent college graduates will receive meaningful full-time employment and valuable work experience plus an introduction in the application of innovation in solving real business and science problems. 1,800 in the New Jersey pilot.
- Up to 200,000 US employers will acquire qualified employees to develop innovative business solutions. 600 in New Jersey pilot.
- 1,000 community colleges and universities will cultivate better partner relationships with local employers. These newly formed partnerships will help foster the development of industry specific local curricula and enhanced employment opportunities. 20 community colleges & universities in the New Jersey pilot.
- A new tax credit program for employers (to be developed) could be implemented for the hiring of unemployed or under employed college graduates and current part time college undergraduate students

The local New Jersey partners of the New Jersey Community College Consortium for Workforce & Economic Development, BioNJ and the New Jersey Business and Industry Association will team with Innovation America to provide the project management expertise to successfully execute the initiative and evaluate the outcomes.