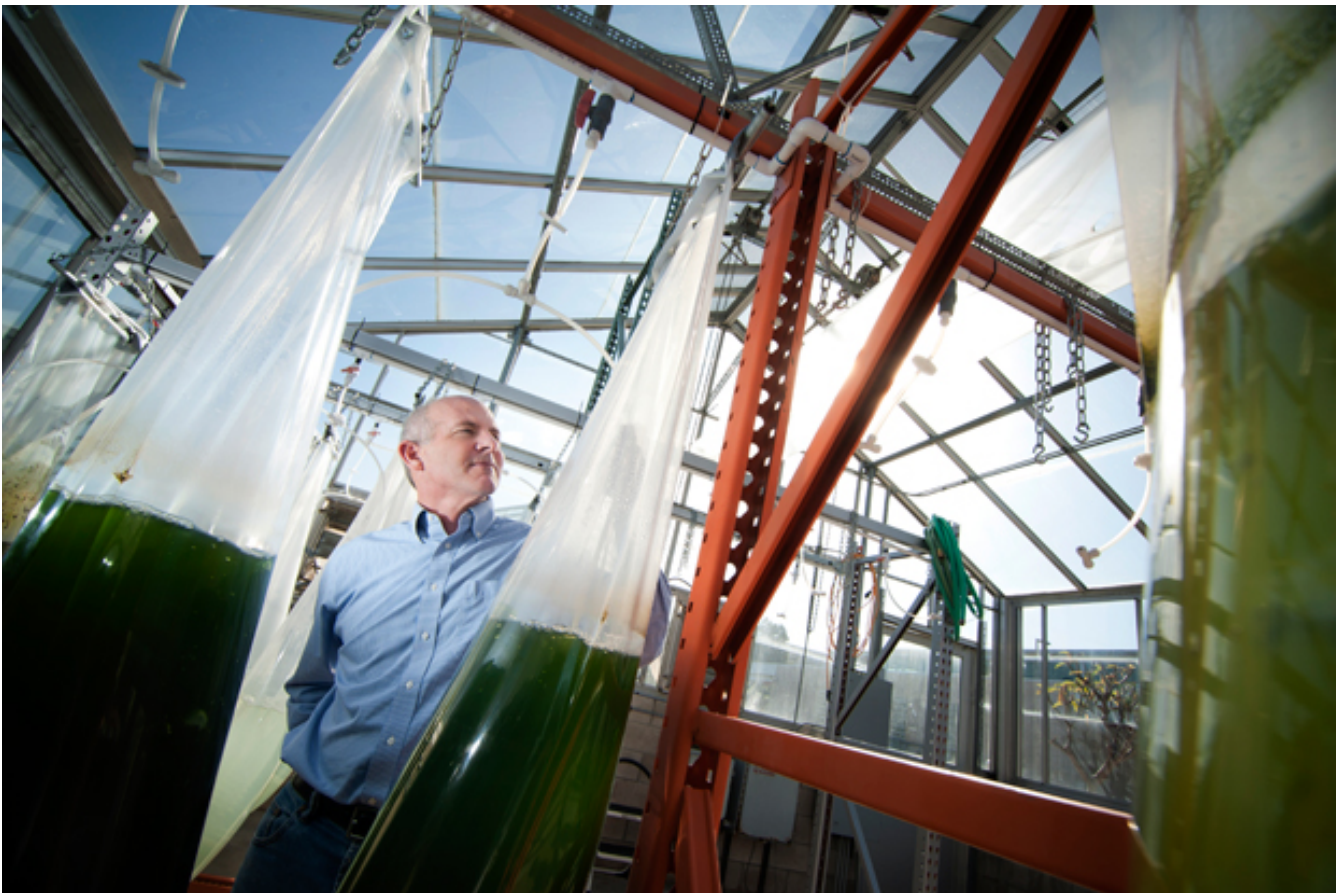


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Free Job Training: 55 Grants Available to Retrain Workers for Biofuels Industry



Photos by Erik Jepsen/UC San Diego Publications

If algae is to be the solution for America's pain at the gas pump, trained workers are needed to make that a reality. Applications are now available for continuing education grants at the University of California San Diego to retrain workers as general science technicians in the rapidly expanding biofuels industry in the San Diego and Imperial County region.

Algae, the substance known to many as "pond scum," may one day be the fuel that powers U.S. automobiles.

“That’s what petroleum is – it’s ancient algae,” said Dr. Stephen Mayfield, a professor of biology at UC San Diego and director of the San Diego Center for Algae Biotechnology, or SD-CAB. “Algae already makes oil that looks like crude oil. The oil we extract from algae goes directly into a refinery and gets converted into diesel or gasoline.”

Approximately 55 students will begin classes in March of 2012, with each student receiving the equivalent of a \$7,000 grant from the State of California. Prospective students from across the California interested in applying for next year’s EDGE program and biofuels and industrial biotechnology companies interested in hiring interns from the program should contact Karen Overklift at the BIOCUM Institute (858) 455-0300, extension 104 or koverklift@biocom.org



The students, who will attend classes at UC San Diego Extension and Mira Costa College, are the second cohort of students in a program funded by a two-year, \$4-million grant from California’s Department of Labor under the Green Innovation Challenge. Information is available at <http://tinyurl.com/4d9m93g>

“Nationwide there is a need for skilled workers to participate in the development and commercialization of new technologies, as we can see in the field of alternative energies,” said Hugo Villar, director of science and technology at UC San Diego Extension. “The university has been a leader in helping adult learners acquire new knowledge and skills that allow them to transition out of stagnant areas of the job market and participate into more vibrant areas as we are doing now with biofuels.”

“This program is not only training workers for new jobs in the local economy, it will eventually help our nation become less dependent on foreign oil,” said Mayfield, “The bioenergy sector will eventually be creating millions of jobs nationwide. Our biggest challenge will be to keep those jobs in California.”

The grant involves the work of a number of local partners, which include UC San Diego, San Diego State University, Mira Costa College EDGE program, SD-CAB, CleanTECH San Diego, BIOCUM Institute, BIOCUM, San Diego Workforce Partnership and the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation. More information is available at <http://algae.ucsd.edu>

“With this training, these students are prepared to support the region’s growing biofuels companies and help San Diego continue to be a leader in the biofuels sector,” said Jason Anderson, vice president of CleanTECH San Diego, a non-profit organization that is helping to accelerate San Diego as a world leader in the clean technology economy.

San Diego is widely recognized as one of the world’s leaders in biofuels research and development. A recent analysis, conducted by the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), found that for the algal biofuels sector alone, the industry provides the region with 410 direct jobs and \$56 million in direct economic activity and \$108 million in total economic activity annually.

“It’s critical that we build the research and development infrastructure for the biofuels industry here,” said Mayfield. “Right now, we have a head start on the rest of the world and we can’t afford to lose that.”

Thanks to the \$4-million EDGE grant, San Diego has also become a national leader in training biofuels technicians. Mayfield said feedback from the program’s graduates, faculty and local biofuels companies will lead to a redesign of the curriculum for the next class of science biofuels technicians, which will run from March through August of 2012. Once the program is perfected, an on-line, web-based curriculum will be made available to any California university or college, and through enrollment in UC San Diego Extension to anyone around the world who wants to gain basic science training to enter the biofuels industry.

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