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## BIOTECH

# Biogen Idec incubator calls on universities

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STAFF WRITER

**B**iogen Idec Inc. is courting technology transfer officials from major Bay State universities and hospitals to attract entrepreneurial scientists to the biotechnology company's new incubator.

Last week, Biogen hosted a crowd of tech transfer staffers from MIT, Tufts University, the University of Massachusetts, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and several other top state research hubs at the firm's headquarters in Cambridge. There, Biogen officials talked

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**Abigail Barrow**  
Director of the Massachusetts Technology Transfer Center

Some incubators provide startups with little more than cheap laboratory space and access to shared equipment. But Biogen

about the company's strategy to use the incubator as another way to load the company's pipeline with potential drugs. "It's very important for us to reach out and tap into (the) scientific innovation that is taking place" at research institutions, said Rainer Fuchs, executive director of the incubator, to tech transfer officials in attendance.

plans to invest between \$3 million and \$10 million in firms housed in its incubator, in return for exclusive rights to the young venture's potential drugs. Biogen would also negotiate an acquisition price for each startup before it moves in, said Fuchs. No startups have moved into the space that has been carved out for the incubator in a building at 241 Binney St. adjacent to Biogen's headquarters. Yet plans are to recruit two to three startups this year for the incubator, known as the Biogen Idec Innovation Incubator, or BI<sup>3</sup> for short.

"They (at Biogen) have resources that a traditional incubator couldn't even dream of," said Abigail Barrow, director of the Massachusetts Technology Transfer Center, which serves as a link between tech transfer offices and companies in the Bay State.

Plans call for the startups in the Biogen incubator to receive administrative and technical support as well as access to assistance from scientific experts from the company, Fuchs said. That way, resident ventures can focus on the scientific aspects of their businesses.

Still, the incubator isn't for every biotech. Fuchs said the startups must have technology that complements Biogen's existing therapeutic interests in drugs related to cancer, immunology, neurology, and cardiovascular conditions. Also, the

company prefers to host start-ups with protein-based or small-molecule drugs that are three to four years away from clinical development.

The incubator has enough space for five startups, and Biogen aims to host each company for two to three years, Fuchs said. Later, if Biogen decides to acquire a startup under the prenegotiated terms, the lead scientists would likely be hired by the big biotech to move their drugs through clinical trials.

Meantime, the incubator is just one of several methods — including in-licensing deals, corporate partnerships and sponsored research — that Biogen uses to develop products, said Steven Bushell, director of operations and portfolio planning for the company.

Fuchs said he thinks more life sciences firms will launch incubators to grow their businesses. In fact, New York-based drug giant Pfizer Inc. has opened an incubator on its campus in La Jolla, Calif., with plans to eventually integrate technology developed there into its own pipeline.

## BIOPEN IDEC INNOVATION INCUBATOR (BI<sup>3</sup>)

**Location:** Cambridge  
**Operator:** Biogen Idec Inc.  
**Director:** Rainer Fuchs

**Employees:** 3  
**Founded:** 2007