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4. McGlinchey Stafford APLLC
5. Lemle & Kelleher LLP

CityBits	10
Dining Out	22
Opinions & Editorials	24-25
Around Town	53

FOCUS: Law Firms
Pages 27-43

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Bio biz enters N.O. test tube

Developers expect boom
if all synergies click



Drs. Nicholas Bazan, left, works with Victor Marcheselli and Diego Lopez Osa in the LSU lab.

Frontier Airlines is one of the low-fare carriers that has enabled Armstrong Airport to remain competitive, despite rising fuel costs.



High fuel costs won't ground N.O. air travel

By Chris Price
Staff Writer

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UNIVERSITY RESEARCHERS, medical, business and political leaders are joining forces in New Orleans to highlight the potential economic impact from biomedical and biotechnological innovations in the city's emerging life sciences industry.

Economic forecasters and development experts believe the life sciences provide one of the best opportunities for the city to



Drs. Nicholas Bazan, left, works with Victor Marcheselli and Diego Lopez Osa in the LSU lab.

establish its place in the emerging knowledge-based economy.

"This is an industry that is rapidly growing and there is opportunity for new markets to become significant players," said Alan Miller, chairman of the New Orleans BioInnovation Center and associate senior vice president for health sciences at Tulane University. "We need to make the public more aware of what we have and to understand the importance of this industry as a compo-

**Mayor
woos
Xavier**

Page 5

nent of New Orleans' future."

The optimism stems from scientific breakthroughs and research conducted by the Tulane and LSU Health Sciences centers, Xavier University and the University of New Orleans.

"We are making tremendous discoveries in our universities, but we need to transfer those discoveries into the applied sector," said Dr. Nicolas Bazan, director of

See **BIO BIZ**, page 60

BIO BIZ*continued from page 1*

the LSU Neuroscience Center of Excellence and scientific founder of St. Charles Pharmaceuticals.

Bazan, who has applied for 18 patents for medical research in the past five years, said researchers need access to business people who know how to start and operate research-related companies, specifically patent attorneys and individuals who can help scientists write clear, effective business plans.

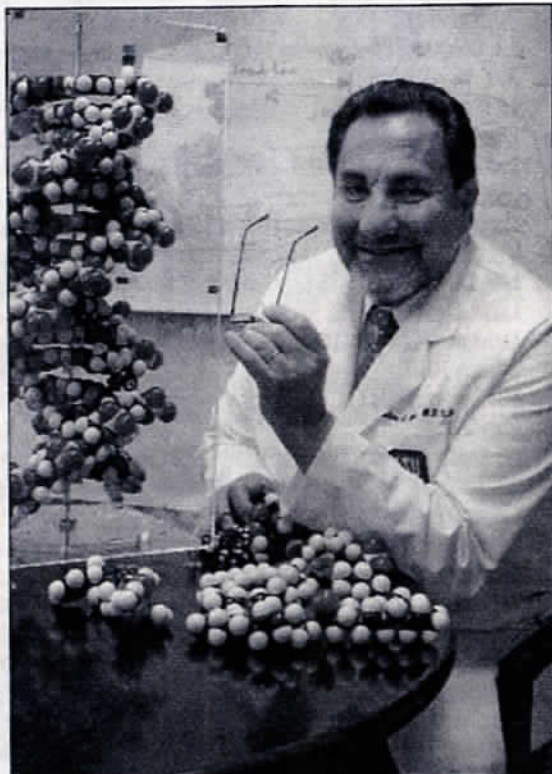
"The most important thing we need is the entrepreneurial spirit," he said.

Few people in the city are knowledgeable about setting up research-based biotech companies, Bazan said. "We will have to establish a culture of entrepreneurs. It's not something that can be done overnight."

Miller said Louisiana is committed to economic development with biotechnology as a major component.

Mark Lewis, president of the Louisiana Technology Council, said the New Orleans BioInnovation Center is one example of the state's commitment.

"One of the BioInnovation Center's most important features is a state-sponsored wet lab incubator," Lewis said.



Dr. Nicholas Bazan wants to transfer discoveries being made in area universities to the city's business sector.

According to Miller, a wet lab comes equipped to conduct research and development, which allows start-up companies to manufacture on a small scale. The incubator allows multiple companies to share high-cost facilities and equipment they would be

unlikely to be able to afford on their own, allowing the businesses to build capital and establish market share before moving on to large-scale production.

"There has never been a facility where a company can come here and do early-stage testing," said James Hardy, director of Technology Development at the LSU Health Sciences Center and co-chairman of Greater New Orleans Inc.'s Life Sciences Cluster. "Without an incubator they wouldn't be able to build and grow their technologies."

Bazan said developing the wet lab incubator is a great start to attracting and developing biotechnology businesses to New Orleans but it will not guarantee success for start-ups.

"Once those discoveries are outside of the universities, there are several things that are needed in order for them to be commercially successful, the least of which is money," he said. "You obviously need venture capital and angel investors, but there needs to be a support structure outside of the universities where discoveries can grow and be developed as a commercial product."

"You have to have a resource system in these incubators that can help many start-up companies get established," he said. "When discoveries move to the private sector, they

don't make large companies; they make small companies. The incubators need to provide services, equipment, legal and financial expertise, which individual start-up companies can not afford."

Bazan said several new businesses must be formed in order to have a major economic impact. "We will need more than one or two successful start-up companies to start an industry," he said.

Competition in the same type of specific research and development is unlikely, Bazan said, so start-up companies can share notes and experiences to ensure success. These businesses can create a ripple effect if they are allowed to establish synergy and networking, which could lead to forming subsidiaries capable of making the tools and equipment for the researchers. The manufacturing companies will need to hire and train workers. The area's energy and chemical industry could also benefit as well as manufacturing plants bring a need for plastics and glass for containers.

"If we can develop these businesses locally, you'll see economic development," Bazan said.

"This industry will allow for job creation," he said. "It starts with people who have extraordinary skills and goes down to people in manufacturing. If it's done right, you can have a real economic impact that will affect the whole community." •

“We have a wonderful tradition of music but imagine if we didn’t. You can’t come in and say ‘OK, today we will start jazz.’ It needs to be developed.”

— Dr. Nicolas Bazan, referring to developing a biotechnology industry in New Orleans