



PRESS RELEASE

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The Wistar Institute Receives \$600,000 Grant to Support Biomedical Technician Training Pre-apprenticeship For Philadelphia Adults Seeking Career Pivot & Regional Community College Students

Grant will support training opportunities for nontraditional students, from community college to adults living and learning in Philadelphia

PHILADELPHIA — (Nov. 24, 2025) — The Wistar Institute Hubert J.P. Schoemaker Education and Training Center can continue offering its signature Biomedical Technician Training (BTT) Pre-apprenticeship Program to bolster job opportunities in the life science sector thanks to a recent \$600,000 grant from the William Penn Foundation.

The newly awarded grant allows Wistar to continue providing access to the increasingly in-demand pre-apprenticeship for community college students and adults throughout the greater Philadelphia region. While the William Penn Foundation first supported the Wistar Institute almost 60 years ago, this is the first William Penn Foundation grant awarded to The Wistar Institute's Hubert J.P. Schoemaker Education and Training Center.

"Our established BTT Program, in its 25th year, has a proven record of providing the necessary foundational knowledge and hands-on lab training required for technicians and research assistants in the life sciences," explained Dean of Biomedical Studies Kristy Shuda McGuire, M.S., Ph.D. "The BTT Pre-apprenticeship Program gives both community college students and adults an entry to pursue life-sustaining careers in the biomedical and pharmaceutical industries in Philadelphia and beyond."

Created in 2000, The Wistar Institute BTT Pre-apprenticeship Program was initially designed as a two-summer, hands-on, mentored, technician training opportunity that prepared community college students for positions in biomedical, biotechnology, and pharmaceutical laboratories.



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In 2021 Wistar accelerated the Program to one summer and has expanded it to now include six regional community colleges. Wistar also offers additional cohorts to extend the Program's reach to adults with a high school diploma who are interested in pursuing career opportunities in the life sciences. Another grant from the National Science Foundation, received in 2024, will bring the Program to additional community colleges in New Jersey and Delaware through Summer 2027, for a total of eight community colleges covering at least 10 counties in three states.

Students complete initial training and then apply and learn more specialized techniques in laboratory experiences at The Wistar Institute and other area academic and industry partner sites.

"The BTT Program offers an accelerated pathway to careers that are of critical importance to life science organizations throughout the region," explained Dr. Shuda McGuire. "This funding from the William Penn Foundation enables us to continue offering the Program and building a skilled workforce to strengthen the life science industry in our region."

"The Wistar Institute's BTT Program opens doors to help people to access workforce training in the high-growth biomedical sciences sector," said Elliot Weinbaum, Chief Philanthropy Officer at the William Penn Foundation. "Through investments in programs like BTT, we are focused on strengthening the most promising programs that help Philadelphians to gain the skills they need for better-paying, family-sustaining jobs."

About the Biomedical Technician Training (BTT) Pre-apprenticeship Program

The Biomedical Technician Training (BTT) Pre-apprenticeship Program is a paid laboratory training program. Community college students take pre-requisite courses and then start their training at The Wistar Institute with a full-time, hands-on laboratory orientation before completing two laboratory experiences. Cohorts of adults seeking new career opportunities begin with 10 weeks of evening classes focused on foundational curriculum in cellular and molecular biology and biotechnology followed by the full-time, hands-on laboratory orientation and a 10-12-week externship at a local employer.

About William Penn Foundation

The William Penn Foundation, founded in 1945 by Otto and Phoebe Haas, is committed to expanding access to resources and opportunities that promote a more vital and just city and region for all. We do this through funding programs in the Philadelphia region in arts and culture, children and families, democracy and civic initiatives, environment and public space, and workforce training and services. Learn more at www.william penn foundation.org.

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The Wistar Institute is the nation's first independent nonprofit institution devoted exclusively to foundational biomedical research and training. Since 1972, the Institute has held National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designated Cancer Center status. Through a culture and commitment to biomedical collaboration and innovation, Wistar science leads to breakthrough early-stage discoveries and life science sector start-ups. Wistar scientists are dedicated to solving some of the world's most challenging problems in the field of cancer and immunology, advancing human health through early-stage discovery and training the next generation of biomedical researchers. wistar.org.