

CYTOVANCE BIOLOGICS/OKLAHOMA CITY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Alayna Trujillo had it all mapped out. She would earn her Associate's degree in the Biotechnology program at Oklahoma City Community College (OCCC), then move on to a four-year university to earn a Bachelor's degree before pursuing a biotech industry job.

The OCAST Intern Partnerships program disrupted those plans in the very best of ways.

As a biotech student at OCCC, Alayna participated in the OCAST program almost four years ago as an intern at Oklahoma City's Cytovance Biologics, a contract manufacturing for biotechnology industry clients nationwide.

After the eight-week internship ended and she had earned her Associate's degree, Alayna never left Cytovance. The company hired her as a full-time employee.

She's still there three and a half years later.

"The internship really opened my eyes as to what I wanted to do," Alayna said. "Once I was at this internship and found this job and what I wanted to do, it just fell into place that I wanted to stay here and gain experience."

Today, she has a great position as Downstream Manufacturing Associate, Level 2, which means she leads projects for Cytovance and also serves as a trainer for what is called downstream manufacturing.

OCAST's innovative Intern Partnerships program provides up to \$30,000 a year to participating Oklahoma businesses that are interested in pursuing innovative R&D projects and teaming up with undergraduate students who help accomplish project goals.

Directed by Dr. Fabiola Janiak-Spens, the OCCC Biotechnology Program has won numerous OCAST Intern Partnerships grants over the last decade, placing students in labs at businesses like Cytovance or in research settings at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center.

In the most recent two-year Intern Partnerships grant, Dr. Janiak-Spens has placed students in seven internships. She has placed 33 individuals through the OCAST grants during her tenure at OCCC that dates back to 2007.

Of those, 20 are currently working in biotechnology or technician jobs in Oklahoma and 12 former students went on to receive advanced degrees. The Intern Partnerships benefit the students, the college and the participating companies, Dr. Janiak-Spens said.

Call it a win-win-win!

For OCCC, the program shows potential future employers that students who emerge from the school's program are well trained, familiar with lab equipment and ready to go to work from Day One.



For participating companies, there is no long learning curve in which they have to train incoming interns.

And for students, it's a chance to showcase what they learned in the OCCC classroom in a real-world environment.

"To be honest, without the internship experience that the students are getting, they would not have the employment success rate," Dr. Janiak-Spens said. "It gives them this direct contact with employers for an extended period of time."

For Alayna, the internship paid an immediate dividend at Cytovance.

"They loved the fact that they didn't have to walk me through step-by-step on how do actually do things," she said. "My favorite part of the internship was actually finding out what I had a passion for. I love what I do."

[Go to the Cytovance website](#)

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