

New partnership could put University of Minnesota at center of biomanufacturing industry

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The University of Minnesota aims to become a hub of bioindustrial manufacturing through a new multimillion dollar partnership partially

funded by the U.S. Department of Defense.

The U's Board of Regents last week approved an agreement to host the Bioindustrial Manufacturing and Design Ecosystem (BioMADE), an effort affiliated with the federal government's Manufacturing USA system.

Bioindustrial [manufacturing](#) uses living organisms, such as bacteria and yeast, to produce more sustainable versions of current products or new inventions. BioMADE, which will focus on nonmedical biomanufacturing, will be housed in a new building on the U's St. Paul campus and university officials say it could be a boon to the state's economy.

"This is the most exciting thing I have seen since I started in '92," said Chris Cramer, who became the U's vice president for research in 2018.

The Department of Defense granted at least \$87.5 million over seven years to BioMADE, which is also receiving more than \$180 million from other sources.

BioMADE is the 16th such Manufacturing Innovation Institute nationwide, and the cities that host them have seen economic benefits. For instance, Pittsburgh, which hosts an institute focused on robotics, has become a leading city in that field.

"We have an opportunity to make the Twin Cities the Silicon Valley of industrial biomanufacturing," said Michael Smanski, a U professor and deputy chief technical officer of BioMADE.

The National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine recently valued the bioeconomy at around \$1 trillion, and a May 2020 report by the consulting firm McKinsey & Co. said the bioeconomy could grow to

\$4 trillion per year over the next 10 to 20 years.

Greater MSP CEO Peter Frosch said the growing bioeconomy could spread across Minnesota.

"It is likely to create entire new categories of occupation," Frosch said. "Not just thousands of new jobs doing things that we know about today, but probably new kinds of jobs."

Students will also feel the impact, Smanski said, as they will have an "upfront seat" to BioMADE's training programs.

Construction is scheduled to begin this year on the 63,400-square-foot building for BioMADE and the U's Biotechnology Resource Center.

"I'm really thrilled about how it will energize the St. Paul campus," College of Biological Sciences Dean Valery Forbes said. "It will modernize the campus and make it more than what it has been traditionally."

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