

Bertie Early College students learn how to produce protein

By **BARRY WARD**
Bertie Ledger-Advance

WINDSOR - A \$40,000 grant is being put to good use in Bertie County. Nine students from Bertie Early College High School visited N.C. State University July 28-Aug. 1 to learn about biotechnology. Bertie Early College

High School biology and biotechnology teacher Bruce Boller said, "The goal of the grant is for us to set up a biotechnology company here [in Bertie County]."

Boller's students will spend the rest of the school year learning how to produce functional molecules, commonly known as proteins, and

sell them to Dr. Matt Koci's lab in Raleigh.

Koci is a poultry researcher at N.C. State University who is looking for a protein that is not currently being sold.

Boller said he hopes his students will produce the protein and lay



BARRY WARD / Bertie Ledger-Advance
Lauren Dunlop works in the science lab at Bertie Early College High School.

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BARRY WARD / Bertie Ledger-Advance
Bruce Boller (second from left) assists his students with their lab experiment.

Protein

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the groundwork for a local business to continue the production.

During the visit at N.C. State, students received a crash course in the necessary steps to produce the protein.

Boller said students are continuing the process in his lab at Bertie Early College, where they are designing some of the equipment used in the production.

He said his students have already begun growing and cloning the bacteria that contain the protein's gene.

The students will then move on to producing and extracting the protein, and then purifying the substance.

The 2015-16 school year will be spent learning the business aspects of protein production.

"So once they learn the science part, they can say, 'Alright, we got this product, how much did it cost for us to make this, and what will be a fair price to ask?' So there will be some entrepreneurial skills they'll learn," said Boller.

Boller obtained the grant with two researchers from N.C. State University.

He is anticipating more grants in the near future so that the pro-



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Takia Murphy works in the lab at N.C. State University.

gram can be expanded to Bertie High and STEM schools.

He added that the expansion should allow them to sell their products to other labs across the state and country.

He said he needs more students to sign up for

the program for production to move more expeditiously.

Anyone interested in joining the protein production program can contact Boller through Bertie Early College at 252-794-2150.



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