

Section: Business

A growing concern



Mamta Popat / Staff

Integrated Biomolecule President Robert Green assembles some equipment in the analytical lab at the new headquarters.

[+ enlarge image](#)

Tech firm's new HQ in Oro Valley offers much-needed space

By David Wichner

ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Scrambling to keep up with rapid growth, Integrated Biomolecule Inc. is moving into spacious new digs in Oro Valley.

The company, which provides chemistry services to the drug and nutritional supplement industries, has been housed since 1994 at the University of Arizona Science and Technology Park, where it occupied 5,300 square feet at 9030 S. Rita Road.

The company's new building at 2005 Innovation Park Drive, in the Rancho Vistoso Tech Center off Rancho Vistoso Boulevard west of Oracle Road, boasts 18,000 square feet of laboratory and office space.

"The business has just exploded - we're totally out of space where we are now," company President Robert Green said.

Green, an attorney who founded Integrated Biomolecule in 1992, estimated that the company's revenues have grown fivefold in the past four years.

The company has two primary businesses: performing research, development and synthesis of biologically-active chemical compounds and providing chemical analysis of nutritional supplements, foods, research samples, fuels and other commodities.

Green declined to name clients but said they include some of the world's largest drug and nutritional supplement companies.

Featuring an arched steel roof and a sculpture depicting a generic analytical graph of a chemical compound on its front, the new building has the high-tech look Green wanted.

"We wanted to make a statement that we're a high-tech company of substance," Green said.

Moving a busy high-tech company cross-town is no easy task, but a little ingenuity helped.

Though the company hired a mover to transfer most of its furniture and equipment, Green and

several employees moved the most sensitive equipment themselves - including a delicate, \$200,000 chemical test instrument called an inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometer.

Looking for a way to cushion the machine in the bed of a pickup truck, Green and his colleagues found just the thing in four small rubber footballs bought at Wal-Mart and slipped under the moving skid.

"We took a little air out of them and they worked great," a blue-jeaned Green said triumphantly while moving Tuesday. That do-it-yourself spirit typifies what Green calls a "biotech bootstrap" philosophy - the company has been entirely funded by internal growth.

"We don't waste money," Green said. "We treat our finances like Day One - we watch every penny."

Even so, the single-story building, designed by Acorn Associates Architecture Ltd. and built by BFL Construction Company Inc., is first-class.

The new building has two large labs - one for organic chemistry and one for analytical chemistry - and five smaller labs, including a genetics lab.

Although Integrated Biomolecule employs only seven people, that may increase as the company's business expands, Green said, adding that the company will use only 13,000 square feet of space initially.

Green believes the site's spectacular views of the Santa Catalina Mountains and the wide array of housing nearby will help recruit new workers.

Even though the company recruits UA students and works with faculty members, Green doesn't see the distance to campus as an obstacle.

Oro Valley Town Manager Chuck Sweet, who dropped by the site this week, said Integrated Biomolecule is a key step in transforming the town's image from a "bedroom community" to a high-tech hot spot.

"To attract something like Robert's company is just reaffirming the message that we're sending here," Sweet said.

While the company picked Oro Valley over possible Tucson locations, Sweet isn't gloating.

"There's always a little bit - not a lot - of competition to attract certain companies bringing high-tech jobs, but at the end of the day, we're supporting the community," he said.

The company's former landlord agreed.

"The fact that they are leaving the (UA) park is a success story for us, not a failure," said Bruce Wright, CEO of the UA Science and Technology Park and a UA associate vice president of economic development.