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UB takes bioinformatics to Timon High School

Business First of Buffalo - by [Allissa Kline](#)

Bioinformatics isn't standard high school material, but it could be for some students at **Bishop Timon-St. Jude High School**.

The all-boys Roman Catholic school in South Buffalo introduced a bioinformatics course this fall for eligible seniors interested in the field. It is the first step toward the high school's planned shift toward career-oriented programs and academies.

"We want to expose kids to health care (fields) and we want to retain more young people in Buffalo," principal Thomas Sullivan said. "We want to give students more opportunities to focus on career development in high school."

The new course, believed to be one of the first bioinformatics programs offered at the high school level, is part of Bishop Timon's planned math and science academy. The high school intends to open three academies, including fine arts and arts and humanities, next fall as a way to better introduce students to potential career fields.

Bioinformatics is part of the region's emerging life sciences industry. It applies computational algorithms and statistical methods to DNA and RNA data sets to support different research areas.

One of the local drivers in the field is the **University at Buffalo**, which operates the New York State Center of Excellence in Bioinformatics and Life Sciences in downtown Buffalo.

UB is helping Bishop Timon with its new course. Anthony Campagnari, a UB microbiology and immunology professor and Timon alum, plans to assist with lectures this fall at the high school, working in conjunction with Bishop Timon science teacher Jenn Putnam. Starting next spring, students will do hands-on, computer-based research at UB with Campagnari and two additional scientists.

Campagnari referred to bioinformatics as "one of the biggest things out there right now" and said the field's quick development means more people will need to be trained to work in the industry.

"I think people with bioinformatics training at the high school level will be far more prepared ... to handle the new technology at the college level," Campagnari said. "I think they'll have distinct advantages."

Bishop Timon officials hope to be able to secure internships for students as part of the academy experience.

They are currently seeking 30 to 40 opportunities with local businesses who can offer internships starting in the fall of 2012.