

The core of life science

By Rod Kackley | MiBiz

rkackley@mibiz.com

GRAND RAPIDS – The new executive director of the **Core Technology Alliance Corp.** (CTA) believes that West Michigan can become a leader rather than a follower in the world's growing life science industry.

John C. Greenfield Ph.D. was appointed as executive director of the CTA in March. Greenfield will direct the CTA's marketing and development strategy; represent the alliance among CTA core directors, customers, industry partners and government collaborators; and cultivate the CTA scientific team and workforce.



Greenfield

CTA members include **Grand Valley State University, Kalamazoo Valley Community College, Michigan State University, the University of Michigan, the Van Andel Research Institute, Wayne State University** and **Western Michigan University.**

The alliance's existing core facilities are dedicated to genomics, proteomics, structural biology, animal models, bioinformatics, high throughput screening, antibody technology, pathology services and clinical stage pharmaceutical contract manufacturing services.

The Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo areas have been working for a decade to grow their life science

communities. There is nothing unique in that. Almost every state in the nation has similar developments and goals. Many are far ahead of West Michigan in terms of tangible research and even commercialization. But Greenfield told *MiBiz* that there is not a region in the United States that has anything similar to the CTA, which includes 11 laboratories and seven institutions of higher education. That collaborative critical mass is the region's advantage.

"This is a real success story," said Greenfield. "It has been difficult to bring these organizations together with all of their conflicting interests and rivalries. Other states have tried, but none have been able to do it."

He maintains that there is a lot of potential for the CTA as an organization because it is a network of cutting-edge capabilities and high-tech labs. He also said that a lot more needs to be done to get that story out across the state.

Greenfield has more than 25 years of scientific and business experience in the pharmaceutical industry, including drug discovery, preclinical and clinical development, project management, business development and licensing and medical and drug information.

He earned a Bachelor of Science in chemistry from Ohio University, and a Doctor of Philosophy in organic and biochemistry from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Later, he was a North Atlantic Treaty Organization post-doctoral fellow in bio-organic chemistry at the Swiss Federal

Institute of Technology in Zürich, Switzerland.

He is even an entrepreneur, something highly prized in the West Michigan life science community. Greenfield joined The Upjohn Company in 1976 as a research scientist and has more than 25 years of scientific and business experience at Upjohn and legacy pharmaceutical companies. Most recently, he co-founded and served as vice president of business development at **BioMedPharmIS Ltd.**, a successful legacy Pharmacia start-up company in Kalamazoo.

Formed in 2000 as an initiative of the former Michigan Life Sciences Corridor, the CTA was incorporated in 2004 and makes sophisticated core technologies available on a fee-for-service basis to biotech and pharmaceutical firms, entrepreneurs and researchers both inside and outside Michigan.

By creating greater access to these technologies, the CTA serves as a catalyst for biotech R&D and development of the life science industry throughout the state. The nonprofit organization remains a key initiative of the Technology Tri-Corridor, providing leadership, oversight and commercialization to Michigan's core facility infrastructure and working to further develop cutting-edge core technologies.

"We can best help the startups advance by giving them access to these high-tech tools," Greenfield said. "So, if a new company doesn't have to set up a structural biology facility for instance, they can come to CTA and get access to a state-of-the-art facility." **MiBiz**