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## **Genovac Antibody Discovery Launches in NDSU Research and Technology Park**

**Fargo, N.D.** (April 26, 2021) – A new biotechnology firm has chosen the North Dakota State Research and Technology Park for its headquarters and operations in the United States. Genovac Antibody Discovery was launched here following the management buyout of an antibody discovery business unit owned by Aldevron, Fargo. The unit was established and operates in Freiburg, Germany.

Genovac is a contract research organization that discovers and develops antibodies for therapeutic, diagnostic and research and development market segments, with clients in North America, Europe, Australia and Asia. The company's core technology, genetic immunization, enables rapid antibody discovery against biopharma's most challenging targets.

The company has served the biopharmaceutical industry for more than 20 years and has completed over 3,500 projects, providing antibodies that have been developed into clinical and commercial drugs. Genovac also has completed more than 25 client and internal COVID-19 campaigns, and has developed two antibodies that successfully neutralize the United Kingdom, Brazilian and South African mutations. Genovac's expansion into the United States will add to the nation's preparedness and capacity to respond to new viruses that could threaten U.S. fighting forces and civilians.

Brian Walters, who had been serving as the president of Aldevron's Antibody Discovery Group, led the management buyout, acquiring all assets and technologies related to the antibody business, which Aldevron initially acquired in 2004. Walters is the president and CEO.

"The NDSU location will allow Genovac to bring the world's most advanced antibody discovery technologies to the U.S. to better serve our North American client base," he said. "At the same time, we'll be providing our federal and academic partners domestic capacity to help further their efforts in combating diseases that threaten public health and our war fighters."

Walters has committed to transferring the company's world-class technologies from Germany to its new headquarters and 8,500 square feet of laboratory space in the NDSU Research and Technology Park. The company has been able to ramp up and accelerate its Fargo operation, thanks in part to a Biosciences Innovation Grant it received from the N.D. Department of Agriculture in October 2020. The funds came to North Dakota as a result of the Coronavirus

Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Genovac used 100 percent of the funds to invest in equipment for its Fargo facility.

"We were pleased that the Bioscience Innovation Grant program could help Genovac foster the growth of the bioscience industry in North Dakota," North Dakota Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring said. "Genovac's decision to establish its headquarters and U.S. operations in North Dakota will expand North Dakota's innovation capability, provide researchers access to the most advanced single-cell discovery and screening technology available, and will change the way we develop new drugs, animal health products and new crop varietals."

Onshoring the technology also will provide domestic capabilities and infrastructure to fight the current and future pandemics while creating high-paying jobs that will retain and attract scientific talent to the region, Walters said. Genovac also will help area researchers, universities and startups attract capital and grants that will be instrumental in increasing the region's innovation assets, as well as enabling the creation of additional high-wage jobs and economic diversification.

In addition to genetic immunization, Genovac has acquired the most advanced single-cell screening technology in the world, the Beacon® Optofluidic System developed by Berkeley Lights.

"The Berkeley Lights platform has changed the way the world develops antibodies by allowing for the discovery of antibodies against targets that have eluded researchers for decades, all while saving months, sometimes years, of development time," Walters said. "The Beacon screening system combined with Genovac's genetic immunization technology is providing first-in-world platforms and approaches to developing new medicines."

While Genovac can make DNA for genetic immunization in one week, the traditional, protein-based method for antibody discovery can take months. By combining its expertise in genetic immunization with advanced, one-day, single-cell screening technology, Genovac is able to generate antibodies rapidly, a critical element to developing drugs to treat infectious diseases such as the coronavirus and its mutations.

"We're more advanced than anyone in the world in terms of combining genetic immunization with the Beacon single-cell screening system," Walters said. "Because of our experience, expertise and technology advantages, we can respond to clients' and society's needs faster, and that can be crucial in outbreak, epidemic and pandemic situations."

Genovac was the first Beacon system user in the world to successfully screen wild type and transgenic rat cells, and the company is currently aiming to be the first to screen rabbit and alpaca cells. All are rich sources for antibodies that can be developed into human therapeutics.

Richard Glynn of the North Dakota Bioscience Association said there is also tremendous potential for the founding of new biotechnology start-ups in North Dakota based on the work Genovac and its partners complete here.

“Nearly every Genovac project has the potential to become a new product or a new business,” Glynn said. “By partnering with North Dakota State University and the University of North Dakota, as well as researchers and practitioners at local health and biotechnology businesses, Genovac will bring new innovation tools that will produce stronger research proposals and product development funding opportunities. It’s been well demonstrated over time that local entrepreneurs and researchers who start companies in North Dakota stay and grow in the state.”

Walters said, “We’re grateful for the support we’ve received from Commissioner Goehring and North Dakota Bio. We look forward to supporting their vision to grow our region’s biotech economy and increase our state’s innovation infrastructure and competitiveness.”

Prior to leading Aldevron’s Antibody Discovery Group, Walters was the company’s chief financial officer. Before that he held multiple leadership positions in economic development organizations across the United States, and he was the president of the Greater Fargo (N.D.) Moorhead (Minn.) Economic Development Corporation from 2002 to 2010.