

# Protea Uses WVU Research to Launch Products

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MORGANTOWN — Protea Biosciences Inc., a local company affiliated with West Virginia University faculty, now produces and sells products that enhance pharmaceutical research.

Protea was one of the first companies to use technology transfer at West Virginia University.

"Protea was formed around the potential for technologies in the area of proteomics," said John Weete, West Virginia University vice president of research and economic development. "They have licensed some of the technologies developed by our faculty. They are not a part of the university, but a private company. It's been a very positive outcome of the collaboration between a small, start-up company and faculty research at WVU."

Protea Biosciences CEO Stephen Turner started the company when he came across research by two WVU scientists who discovered ways to identify the proteins within cells.

"In 2002 I met with two WVU faculty members, Aaron Timperman, Ph.D., at the department of chemistry and Dan Flynn, Ph.D., at the cancer center," he said. "They had come up with a way to improve the ability to identify proteins in cells, blood or tissue, like a tumor biopsy. Proteins are the starting points for drug development. A drug is designed to lock on a specific protein. The technology today is not good; most proteins within cells cannot be identified. Finding ways to identify these proteins opens up biology to pharmaceutical development."

Turner started Protea in the business complex just off Hartman Run Road.

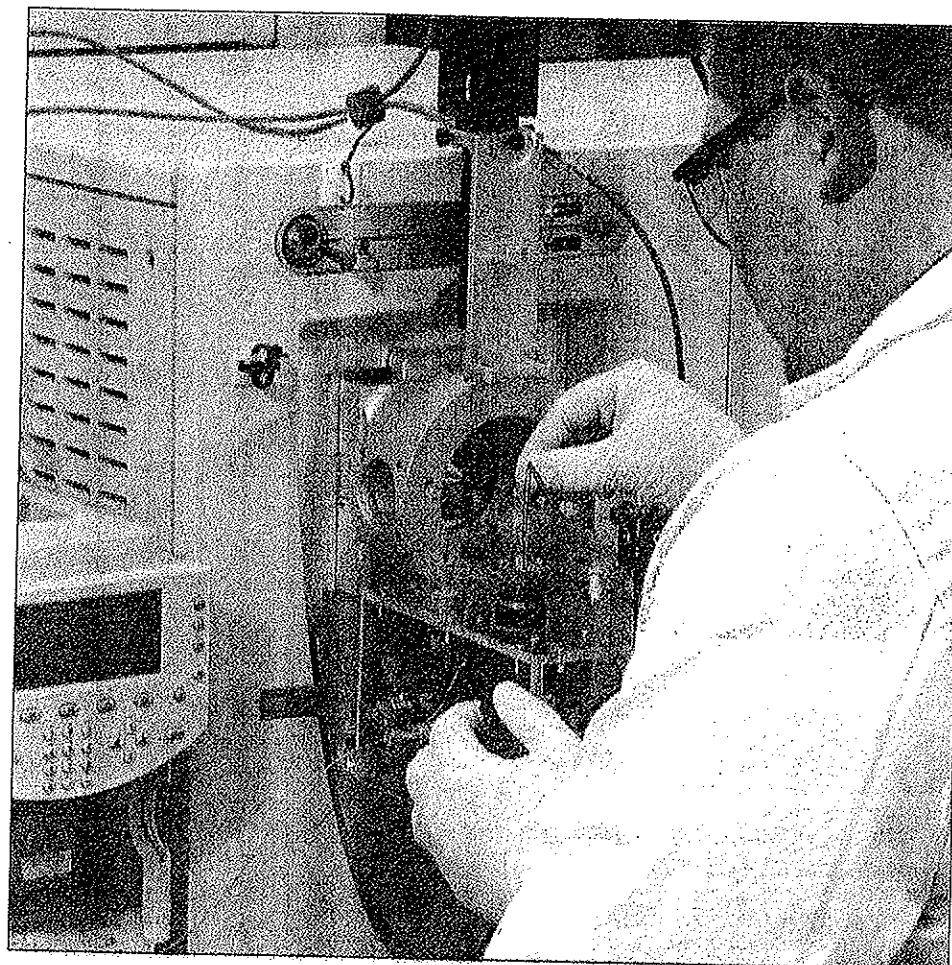


Photo courtesy of Protea Biosciences Inc.  
Matthew Powell works on a mass spectrometer at Protea Biosciences Inc. on Hartman Run Road in Morgantown. WVU Vice President of Research and Economic Development said Protea Biosciences was one of the first licensing agreements of its time.

"Tech transfer is usually to a company outside the state," he said. "We assemble and test our products right here in Morgantown. The beauty of this is the asset and job creation ben-

efits not only WVU, but Morgantown and the area."

Turner, who has a master's degree in business administration from Stanford University, has spent his entire

professional career in the life sciences. He said he opened Protea aware of the time and commitment technology transfer takes.

"During the development stage, you run very lean," he said. "With biotech companies, this stage normally takes four to seven years. You are creating assets, starting with knowledge and converting it to product. That takes time and organizing the right team. You are developing the technologies and testing, validating them. It's a whole cycle, then you connect to the market. That's a lot easier."

Protea Biosciences was in the development stage for five years.

"We just launched our products in the spring," Turner said. "Our business is to develop products for pharmaceutical researchers so they can get better data — identify more proteins. We're selling products now to several pharmaceutical companies and laboratories."

Protea employs nine people, three of whom have doctoral degrees.

"Many of our employees are WVU graduates who would have left the area," Turner said.

As Protea markets its products, the company also is looking ahead to other technology transfer possibilities in the field.

"We're a manufacturing company," Turner said. "We have a very good pipeline based on research at the university. Major universities do this a lot. The great thing is that now we have that process going on in Morgantown; companies starting out around the university."