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MCG's Dr. John Nechtman (right) talks with an international delegation visiting Augusta. Greater Georgia is tying business in the state's second-tier cities to European Union partners.
JONATHAN ERNST/STAFF

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Biotech officials travel to Augusta

Web posted Wednesday, June 11, 2003
By [Tom Corwin](#) | Staff Writer

As Georgian and European biotech officials tour Augusta this week and talk about future partnerships, they could take a page from the world of research, where borders are becoming meaningless, scientists said.

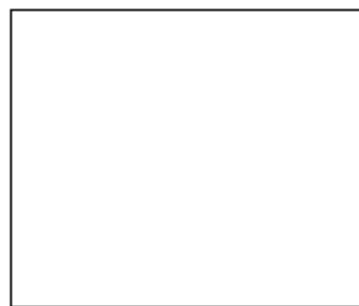
Greater Georgia is a regional economic development effort that seeks to pair Georgia's second-tier cities - Columbus, Savannah, Macon and Augusta - with European Union partners. Both sides are hoping for collaborations that can help expand their biomedical and high-tech industry bases.

None of the discussions has borne fruit yet, but talks are continuing, said Philip Shapira, a professor of public policy at Georgia Tech and one of the proponents of the effort.

Research universities such as the Medical College of Georgia might lead the way, officials said. Dr. J.K. Collins, the vice president for research at University College Cork in Ireland, and James Houston, the director of research and innovative services at the University of Dundee in Scotland, toured MCG's Core Laboratories and openly admired some of the equipment, such as a "gene chip" analyzer that can run samples against a postage stamp-size panel containing the known 33,000 genes.

Dr. Collins, a gastroenterology and colon cancer researcher, said samples from some

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of his patients in Cork are studied at laboratories throughout the European Union. The EU funding not only encourages that but also demands it as part of the funding process, he said.

Another research effort involves 64 European labs, Dr. Collins said.

"Academic collaboration is the lifeblood of academia," Mr. Houston said.

European research papers are finding greater acceptance in prestigious U.S. journals as universal research standards are being adopted internationally. In Cork, for instance, one-twelfth of the world's pharmaceuticals are produced to standards set by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Dr. Collins said,

"The world is becoming a very small place," he said.

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