

# UpstateBlog.net

**The Public Policy Institute  
of New York State, Inc.**

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## Upstate bio-tech center loses 20 staff to Georgia

The Atlanta *Journal-Constitution* is reporting that the head of the University at Buffalo's Center for Excellence is leaving for Georgia Tech, and taking 20 scientists with him.

*Jeffrey Skolnick, a scientist in systems biology — a field that uses supercomputers to break down information in the genetic code in a quest to create new drugs — also will bring \$1.5 million in grant funding to Tech.*

*Skolnick's arrival in Buffalo, N.Y., made headlines. The Center of Excellence in Bioinformatics, which he led, was regarded as a symbol of hope for the struggling upstate economy. He was regarded as the academic equivalent of a celebrity.*

*But his 3 1/2 years at the school were marked by clashes with university officials, and he was known to be looking for a new home for his work.*

*Gary Schuster, dean of Tech's College of Sciences, called Skolnick, who is 52, an "acclaimed figure" in the highly competitive field of bioinformatics. He said the researcher and his team "will be making important discoveries that will pay off in societal benefits" in the fight against diseases like cancer.*

*Skolnick is the 51st scholar who has been recruited to the state by the Georgia Research Alliance, a nonprofit corporation made up of business and university leaders that fosters the growth of biotech start-ups.*

*The group will pay for part of Skolnick's \$2 million endowed chair at Tech, said the research alliance's president, Michael Cassidy. The state will pick up a \$5 million tab for computers and specialized laboratory equipment Skolnick needs for his research. He will be paid a salary of \$225,000 a year, Tech officials said.*

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*Skolnick said in a telephone interview Tuesday that the university and the city of Buffalo set "unrealistically high" expectations for him. The city hoped the biotech center would bring instant life to an economically depressed area, a feat that proved difficult, Skolnick said.*

Bright scientists such as these will have to play a key role if Western New York is to climb out of its long economic stagnation (perceived even way down there in Atlanta). We're sorry to see them leave.

**And:** Columnist Donn Esmonde lets readers know [what Buffalo's "everyman" thinks about the promises for Buffalo's revitalization.](#)

*I found him in his usual spot, hunkered at a table in a dark corner of a nameless coffee shop. He had two-day stubble on his face and his shirt was rumpled.*

*Call him Buffalo Joe. He is our fictional Everyman, the imaginary icon of the dashed hopes that hound us. He is the ghostlike symbol of ever-delayed projects, of dumb ideas that got done and good ideas stuck in limbo.*

*Buffalo Joe was once bright-eyed and eager. Decades of*

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Snapshot

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