

Quantitative Biology Initiative
Executive Committee Meeting Notes
January 30, 2008

Attendees: Bob Hausinger, Claire Vieille, David Arnosti, Kris Chan, Bob Cukier, Wenjiang Fu, Leslie Kuhn, David Weliky, Maria Zavodszky, and Helen Geiger.

Absent: Wolfgang Bauer, Shelagh Ferguson-Miller, Marianne Huebner, and Bill Wedemeyer.

Agenda:

1. Announcements: Bob Hausinger

A. Change in level of funding for QBI: Due to miscommunications during negotiations, QBI support is less than expected. MAES did not agree to share $\frac{1}{4}$ the cost associated with 1 month of summer salary for the co-Directors.

B. IGERT update: An email sent by NSF on Jan. 15 indicated that awardees would be notified in the following week. A follow-up message suggested that a new application be prepared, and indicated that detailed feedback is not expected until April. Bob and Claire will begin the process to resubmit as a preproposal—first going through the MSU screening process.

C. TLE requests: The Teaching and Learning Environment (TLE) funding requests will include the traditional instructional computing requests (e.g., faculty computers) and a new category called the Strategic Investment Program (SIP). QBI has been instructed to work with the standard departments to develop any of our requests. Ideas were discussed. In particular, the EC agreed that QBI should endorse a proposal developed by several departments (MMG, PBL, BMB) to develop plans for hands-on undergraduate bioinformatics courses. This would likely include support of an instructor, TAs, purchase of a bank of 30 computers on a cart that can be wheeled to instructional sites, and software to run the needed programs. QB students could be ideal TAs, some QB grad students would benefit from the undergraduate course, and the grad QB 826 course might have access to the equipment.

2. Selected Committee Reports

A. Graduate Recruiting Committee: Wenjiang Fu (Chair, EPI), Michael Feig (BMB/CEM), Guowei Wei (MTH), Claire Vieille (BMB), Keyur Desai (grad student, Elect Eng). The Committee set a goal of recruiting 5 students this year, with long-term goals of 10 per year. Minimal standard requirements for acceptance into the program were established (e.g., $GPA \geq 3.5$; $TOEFL \geq 100$ with speaking ≥ 20 ; and $GRE Q \geq 50\%$ [domestic students] and $Q \geq 75\%$ [international students]). They discussed three features of recruiting.

(i) The long term goal of the committee is to recruit outstanding **new** students to MSU via QB (with mechanisms put into place to assure that each student becomes

affiliated with a QB-associated department). Three students that approached QB directly (including two students from ZheJiang University) were evaluated through this process and viewed positively. A mechanism is being put into place to recruit directly into QB (contingent upon acceptance into a traditional program). Our QB fellowships were viewed as being critical to this recruiting process. By coupling $\frac{1}{2}$ of a fellowship to $\frac{1}{4}$ RA by the department, the students will become more attractive to the various units and in-state tuition rates apply. This recruiting fellowship would relieve students in certain departments from teaching duties for one semester, allowing them to do rotations and make an informed choice of PhD research lab. A motion was made to use a portion of QB fellowship funds (e.g., to help attract 1-3 top-quality applicants per year) for this purpose; the **vote** was unanimously approved. Continued use of the remaining fellowship support for rewarding 2nd and 3rd year students was viewed very positively.

(ii) Students visiting MSU as part of recruiting weekends will be made aware of the QB program. QB-related departments will be asked to inform newly accepted students of the QB program and to let them know of QB fellowship opportunities. Also, efforts will be made to inform outstanding undergraduates (such as those in the Professorial Assistant program) about the QB program; where they would be encouraged to explore new directions than their undergraduate research experiences.

(iii) The current first year students in QB-affiliated units will be informed of the program via email invitations to a “QB night” and encouraged to apply.

B. Seminar Committee: David Weliky (Chair, CEM), Michael Feig (BMB/CEM), David Arnosti (BMB), and Marianne Huebner (STT) (with a graduate representative to be added) have coordinated with the folks in Engineering and Physics to run the Science at the Edge Seminars. The committee has begun to plan the program for next year, including 4 potential speakers from last year who were invited but unable to come. Additional names will be solicited. Honoraria amounts are being considered, and posters will likely be continued at \$600-\$800/year. The Seminar Committee will make sure that the MAES (the source of seminar funding) will receive a SATE poster. Funding of the seminars, conferences, and symposium will need to be coordinated.

C. Conference Committee: David Arnosti (Chair, BMB) reported that a committee (including Bill Henry, Min-Hao Kuo, Ian Dworkin, Chichia Chiu, and Kris Chan) is well along in planning the Midwest Summer Symposium on Transcription Regulation and Systems Biology to be held July 18-20. The speakers (20) are on board and a web site will soon be developed for registration. Funding of the conferences, seminars, and symposium will need to be coordinated.

D. Public Relations Committee: Maria Zavodszky (Chair, BMB) reported on the improvements to the web site and requested assistance from all, but especially the Recruiting committee, to enhance the site for potential QB students and other users. The list of EC members, the committee roles, and the EC meeting minutes are posted. Chairs of the committees are asked to provide the list of the committee members. A conference page will be expanded to include outside conferences of potential interest to QB folks.

3. QBI Symposium & Meeting of the QBI voting and affiliate members: Claire Vieille summarized the preliminary plans to have a ½ day symposium to present the new QBI, summarize the QB grad program, highlight the QBI activities (research thrusts, conferences, seminars), announce the fellowship recipients, etc. for some time in May or June (but not May 3 when there will be a Genetics conference organized by Andy Amalfitano). Volunteers to help organize this meeting are eagerly sought! Poster and table-top laptop or projector presentations would be included to showcase some current QBI research activities.

4. External Advisory Board: Bob and Claire. This was just a reminder to keep in mind potential EAB members who would represent each of the four focus areas and provide useful insights to QBI.