

Quantitative Biology Initiative

Executive Committee Meeting Notes

December 12, 2008

Attendees: Bob Hausinger, Peter Bates, Robin Buell, Bob Cukier, Christina Chan, Shelagh Ferguson-Miller, Wenjian Fu, Helen Geiger, Claire Vieille, David Weliky

Not able to attend: David Arnosti, Leslie Kuhn, Bill Wedemeyer

Agenda:

1. Announcements (Bob Hausinger)

- **QBI Symposium Feedback:** **(1)** Excellent presentations by several QBI faculty provided a nice overview of who we are and what research areas we emphasize. The slideshows are posted on the web. **(2)** From David DeWitt: "Your group did a nice job presenting an overview of QB and illustrating the far reaching research of its members. There are many talented people involved in QB that have spent enormous time and energy to make this program successful. I appreciate your efforts." **(3)** Ian Gray commented on the symposium web summary: "Thanks. These are very helpful!" **(4)** Despite extensive advertising, the attendance by administrators, current QBI faculty, and potential QBI faculty was rather limited. An alternative approach to an annual meeting should be considered next time. **(5)** Peter Bates will explore the possibility of having short QBI presentations at Chair/Director meetings for the various colleges.
- **T32 NIH proposals:** The Molecular Biophysics proposal received a score of 244, so will not be funded. Reviewer comments have not been received. A second T32 proposal in the area of Gene Expression was not reviewed. The QBI participants in these proposals and the PIs (Bob Hausinger and David Arnosti, respectively) are encouraged to address the concerns and try again.
- **NSF IGERT proposals:** MSU has the opportunity to submit 4 pre-proposals with a March 13 deadline (full proposal deadline is Sept. 14). The MSU deadline is probably mid-February. QBI participants should be involved in generating one or more of these proposals; however, the twice submitted theme of "Experimental and Computational Cross-Training in Biomolecular Motion and Catalysis" is unlikely to be successful. Robin Buell, Kris Chan, and others will lead a discussion of a possible proposal focused on some aspect of Bioinformatics during the Bioinformatics Symposium to be held on Dec. 13. Also, Bob Hausinger will explore interest in a proposal in Metallomics.
- A proposal to establish a Center at the Interface of Mathematical and Biological Sciences (**CIMBS**), co-developed by UMich, MSU, and WSU and with educational involvement of QB, was not supported. This effort came in third with the funding going to Knoxville.

2. QBI Funds (Bob Hausinger and Peter Bates)

- The current funding of QBI (2007-2012) is derived from the colleges (\$63K/yr) and MAES (\$17.5K/yr), along with \$134K/yr fellowship support from the Graduate School. These funds were initially distributed as follows: \$28K for administrative support (slightly less than ½ of Helen's salary), \$35K for the co-director (1/2 of Claire's salary), and \$17.5K for seminars, symposia, office expenses. Claire became an Asst Prof on a 9 month appointment, resulting in a ~\$4K carryover from 2007-2008 and release of the current year ~\$35K allocation.
- Optimal use of these funds were discussed, and the EC agreed that the first priority for use of this funding should be to compensate those directing QBI and the QB graduate program by providing up to one month of summer salary (details still to be determined). Additional funding would be used to reward those with extensive QB teaching efforts, especially as the courses are in their early phases; e.g., by providing funds for travel and other purposes. Finally, remaining funds could be used for graduate fellowships.

3. External Advisory Board (Peter Bates)

- The prior EAB included Chris Adami (Caltech/Keck Graduate Institute), Jayanth Banavar (Penn. State, Dept. Physics), Ronald Levy (Rutgers Univ., Dept. Chemistry/Chemical Biology), Gerald Maggiora, Univ. Arizona Coll. Pharmacy, Dept. Pharm. & Toxicology), Fengzhu Sun (USC, Dept. Biol. Sci.). These individuals were used prior to the renaming of QBMI (or CBM) to QBI and the development of our bylaws. The merits of these scientists were discussed, along with the need for EAB members with other areas of expertise.
- A few new names were discussed (Avner Friedman, formerly Dir. of MBI in Ohio; Marty Golubitsky, current Dir. of MBI; Hans Othmer of the Mathematical Biology program in Univ. Minn.; Lou Gross, Dir. of CIMBS at Knoxville; Julie Mitchell, UW-comp biology group; Ivet Bahar, Univ. Pittsburgh). Peter Bates will request more names and information from the QBI membership.
- The role of EAB members during their 3 year terms will include teleconferences that focus on evaluating the research and education strengths and weaknesses of QBI, and helping us plan strategy for obtaining training grants.

4. Committee Activities

- Graduate Recruiting and Fellowship Committees (Wenjiang Fu): **(1)** Michael Grillo was invited to serve as the graduate student representative to the Recruiting Committee. **(2)** With a recent admission, we now have a total of 12 QB students (?). Two other students were asked for more information to complete their files. **(3)** Applications to the QB Program will be reviewed in two rounds (early February and mid-summer) to best coordinate with potential recruits. The goal is to get the best students from outside MSU as well as from those who are already here. **(4)** Students will be required to apply to QB within one year of choosing a mentor. **(5)** The web site will more clearly explain the application

timing and process, provide a pre-application for use by QB, include links to the application pages for cooperating departments, and list Claire Vieille as the primary contact person who can help identify the appropriate partner department.

(6) The process used for recruiting fellowships will change to one that provides summer stipends (which charge only in-state tuition, with the possibility of waiving the 1 credit requirement). This change will circumvent the problems with $\frac{1}{4}$ time TAs (where some programs were then paying extra to hire the other $\frac{1}{4}$) and with Fall or Spring $\frac{1}{2}$ -time stipends where tuition (paid by the student from the fellowship) is taxed. **(7)** Our research fellowships, targeted to upper level students who are unlikely to be paying tuition, will continue to vary in length and amount.

- Conference Committee (Claire Vieille): Shin-han Shiu organized a Bioinformatics Symposium for Dec. 13. This meeting will define: **(1)** Who at MSU is doing bioinformatics research? **(2)** What type of work is going on? **(3)** How can the research in this area be enhanced? **(4)** What are the needed changes to improve bioinformatics education? As mentioned above, the Symposium gathering also will be used to explore interest and identify a possible theme for an IGERT proposal.
- Public Relations Committee (Robin Buell): Many changes to the web site will be needed, but substantial changes involve costs to Matrix. Alternative web efforts will be investigated by Robin, Peter Bates, and Helen by discussions with colleagues. In the meantime, Helen Geiger will make the routine changes that are needed.