



# UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA • IRVINE

## NEWS

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FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE**

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### **UC IRVINE PROGRAM THAT MELDS LIFE SCIENCES AND COMPUTERS AWARDED \$5.6 MILLION GRANT**

*Interdisciplinary training ground is one of 18 nationwide*

**Irvine, Calif., August 16, 2007** – The UC Irvine Institute for Genomics and Bioinformatics (IGB) has been awarded \$5.6 million over five years from the National Institutes of Health to continue training students to apply advanced computer and information technologies in the biological and medical sciences.

The funding will be used to expand the interdisciplinary Biomedical Informatics Training (BIT) program, an initiative led by IGB Director and Chancellor's Professor Pierre Baldi and Professor G. Wesley Hatfield to train graduate students and postdoctoral fellows in the UCI Donald Bren School of Information and Computer Sciences (ICS), The Henry Samueli School of Engineering, and the schools of physical sciences, biological sciences, and medicine.

One of only 18 such programs in the country, the BIT program in 2002 received from NIH the largest training grant of its kind.

“Biomedical informatics is a two-way synergy that brings together life and computational sciences,” Baldi said. “We can use computers to better understand living systems and conversely draw inspiration from living systems to design better machines for processing information.”

The process and analysis of genomic data increasingly requires advances in storing, networking, analyzing, modeling, and visualizing biological and medical information. The BIT program provides specialized training in both computational and life sciences, and it offers in-depth training that develops core skills in molecular biology and biochemistry, computer modeling of biological systems, statistics, programming, and database development. Every student is required to work with two faculty mentors – each from different disciplines – and to team with another student initially trained in another field.

“Working with advisers and peers from different disciplines gives students a much more comprehensive education in biomedical informatics,” Hatfield said.

Graduates of the BIT program are now working for biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies such as Primarion and Sangamo Pharmaceuticals; in industry for businesses such as Focus Diagnostics and CODA Genomics; and in academic positions at institutions such as Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, South Illinois University Carbondale, and UC Irvine. Three honorary program members have gone on to the University of Missouri, University College Dublin, Ireland, and University of Provence/Aix-Marseille in France.

“This is a visionary program now being emulated by other universities,” states an Academic Program Review for the ICS school in 2005. “There is no formal national rating and may not be for some time. Yet, despite the rapid growth in the subfield and the several dozen programs that have been established nationally, the UCI effort in this case is in [the] top 10 now, and should be able to stay there.”

The field of computational biology is booming at UC Irvine. Earlier this month, its Center for Complex Biological Systems received a \$14.5 million grant from the NIH to enhance the study of systems biology, or why the human body and other organisms work the way they do. Systems biology also is a research focus of the IGB, which has attracted more than \$25 million in research funding since it was established in 2000.

**About the Institute for Genomics and Bioinformatics:** The Institute for Genomics and Bioinformatics (IGB) was established in 2000 and is housed in the Donald Bren School of Information and Computer Sciences. IGB fosters and conducts research involving life and computational sciences. Since its inception, IGB has attracted more than \$25 million in research funding. For more: <http://www.igb.uci.edu/>.

**About the Donald Bren School of Information and Computer Sciences:** The Donald Bren School of Information and Computer Sciences is the first independent computer science school within the UC system and one of the fastest-growing programs of its kind in the nation. Elevated from department to school status in December 2002, information and computer sciences at UCI is an academic community of more than 1,500 students, more than 100 full-time faculty and staff, and approximately 6,500 alumni worldwide. With experts in areas ranging from embedded computer systems and networking to bioinformatics and the social impacts of computing, the school ranks 15th among all public university computer science graduate programs, according to U.S. News & World Report.

**About the University of California, Irvine:** The University of California, Irvine is a top-ranked university dedicated to research, scholarship and community service. Founded in 1965, UCI is among the fastest-growing University of California campuses, with more than 25,000 undergraduate and graduate students and about 1,800 faculty members. The second-largest employer in dynamic Orange County, UCI contributes an annual economic impact of \$3.7 billion. For more UCI news, visit [www.today.uci.edu](http://www.today.uci.edu).

**News Radio:** UCI maintains on campus an ISDN line for conducting interviews with its faculty and experts. The use of this line is available free-of-charge to radio news programs/stations who wish to interview UCI faculty and experts. Use of the ISDN line is subject to availability and approval by the university.