


BioSys Scientific Advisory Board

Report 2015

The BioSYS Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) and BioISI SAB member Juan Valcarcel Juarez met on 11.12.2015 with most of the (2014 and 2015) BioSYS students. This meeting followed a 1-minute presentation plus poster viewing from each PhD student. As a result of this direct and instructive interaction, we wish to convey to BioSYS doctoral program director the following remarks and recommendations:

- There is a need to learn from experts in systems biology and not from separate experts in biology and computation; a protocol with a systems biology institute (e.g., Systems Biology Summer School, Centro de Regulación Genómica, Barcelona) should be established and experts brought in since there are now funds available.
- The computational analysis component seems forced in some projects.
- Absence of the chair of the Training Board Carlos Farinha (on sabbatical leave in 2015) was felt by the students during this year, since there was no one that knew as well how things worked. The appointment of a Training Board deputy-chair should be considered.
- Overall organization should improve and changes in the teaching schedule communicated in a timely manner to the students.
- A disproportionate number of research projects are focused on CFTR and cystic fibrosis.
- The language barrier between the foreign students and the administration services from FCUL was not eliminated.
- Thesis Advisory Committees are working very well in general but the students should know beforehand the evaluation criteria and the relative weight of each criterion.
- One minute for the oral presentations is far too short to reflect one year of work; should consider 5 minutes, at least, plus time to an effective poster viewing.
- Younger PIs or PIs that are not from the core BioISI team should be given more opportunities to supervise students.
- Soft skills courses should be offered as soon as possible.

Lisboa, 28 Janeiro 2016

  
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