

# Selected Highlights

## Issue No. 2

### 2010



### Systems Biology: “Moving towards the next generation biology” - 4 November

This Symposium held on November 4 was highly successful with over 200 registrants. Excellent presentations were given by Professors Peter Hunter, Liam O’Connor, Richard Fox, Mark Cook, Terry O’Brien, David Bowtell, Phil Hodgkin, Peter Harris, Trevor Lithgow and Marc Wilkins, and Doctors Susan Forest, Susie Nilsson and Paul Chambers. Click here to access the presentations. Despite much discussion there still remains some difficulty in defining the term ‘systems biology’!

#### Auditorium and Atrium at the Bio21 Institute, University of Melbourne



Keynote speaker Professor Peter Hunter and Dr Stella Clark



### Systems Biology Facilitated Workshop - 5 November

The day after the symposium, a facilitated discussion was held using a Victorian Government-approved facilitator, with the goal of developing a broad Victorian-wide proposal around systems biology. The focus of discussions was around integrated ‘omics networks and the need to invest in infrastructure that will enable research and linkage between research groups. Representatives of the various groups will now work together to prepare a highly specific proposal that will go to the Victorian Government.

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### **MBA in a Day: Business Basics for BioScientists - 30 July**

The Bio21 Cluster worked with BioMentoring Australia to run this pilot program. The one day course provided non-business professionals with an intensive introduction to the key concepts, the language and the business principles underpinning management and the commercialisation of science. It was intended to strengthen a scientist's ability to understand how business people think, to communicate effectively in business negotiations and to take the right strategic actions needed to successfully commercialise the innovations they themselves or their organisation are developing. On the day there were 35 registrants and the feedback was very positive. The program subsequently ran at the OzBio 2010 conference.



### **NoLIMITS Symposium - Nossal institute for Low cost Integration of Medicine and Innovative Technologies - 13 July**

This symposium was organised jointly by the Bio21 Cluster and the Nossal Institute for Global Health and was based on the CIMIT model of presenting clinical problems to a multidisciplinary group. Four clinical problems that are significant issues in the developing world were presented to a broad group that included engineers, physicists, mathematicians and biomedical scientists. The group then brainstormed practical solutions. There were 30+ attendees across the afternoon with about 20-25 present in any one discussion. The Nossal Institute has indicated they will be able to provide seed funding for a project that develops from this workshop. Two of the projects have moved forward and are undergoing further development.



### **Visit by Mr James Greenwood, President and CEO of BIO - 21 October**

The Victorian State Government requested the Bio21 Cluster host a visit for Mr James Greenwood, President and CEO of BIO, the USA's biotechnology industry organisation. The Cluster was able to give Mr Greenwood an opportunity to meet with a wide range of people from across the Bio21 Cluster, who have interests and expertise in the commercial side of health and medical research. Mr Greenwood was also taken on a tour of nearby Cluster Member organisations.

### **Victorian Clinician Researcher Network (VCRN) Forum**

The VCRN continues to develop, with sessions at the Clinical Research Excellence 2010 Conference (CRX10) devoted to early career clinician researcher issues, and on November 24 an evening forum generously hosted by the Epworth Hospital. Dr Andrew Wilson, Cardiologist at St Vincent's Hospital and Co-convenor of the VCRN, gave an overview of the goals of the network, i.e. to facilitate research activities by clinicians and allied health workers. This was followed by two research presentations from Dr Harriet Hiscock, Paediatrician at the Royal Children's Hospital and Co-convenor of the VCRN, and Prof Neil Watkins, Monash Institute of Medical Research. General discussion among forum participants helped further refine issues for clinician researchers.

### **Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) Conference - 22 July, and the 300th UROP participant**

The UROP Conference Day was again a great success with 25 speakers and approximately 100 attendees. Long-time supporter of UROP, Mr Tony Lupton, former Cabinet Secretary in the Victorian Government, opened proceedings and noted the importance of the UROP scheme in developing the next generation of researchers. This year saw the inauguration of two prizes generously sponsored by UROP's principal sponsor, CSL Ltd, for best presentation in the categories of Biomedicine/Biotechnology, and the Victorian Life Sciences Computation Initiative (VSLCI) for best presentation in Bioinformatics. The prizes were won by Yen Huynh and Kimberley McLean, respectively, both third year Bachelor of Science students at the University of Melbourne.



## Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) Conference - 22 July, and the 300th UROP participant (contd....)

Yen's project is in the Autoimmunity and Transplantation Division of the WEHI and Kimberley's UROP project is with the Department of Medicinal Chemistry, Monash Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences. More information appears in an article in the University of Melbourne [newsletter MUSSE](#).



UROP Manager Dr Tam Nguyen (centre) with prize winners Yen Huynh (R) and Kimberley McLean (L)

The winter intake of UROP passed the milestone of 300 participants since the Bio21 Cluster assumed management of the scheme in 2004. The achievement was acknowledged by the invitation of Benita Knox to attend the Bio21 Cluster Annual General Meeting. Benita, a fourth year Science/Arts student at the University of Melbourne, is completing her UROP placement at the Burnet Institute and gave an absorbing account of how UROP broadened her appreciation of biomedical research.

### UROP Forum—Professor Harvey Lodish

Eminent US molecular and cell biologist and acclaimed leading author of the principal textbook 'Molecular Cell Biology', Professor Harvey Lodish, gave a presentation on 29 September, hosted by the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute, on the future of students' scientific training. In his presentation he highlighted the crucial role of research experience through programs like UROP in inspiring future researchers. A number of UROP students attending the lecture had the opportunity to have their textbooks autographed! Professor Lodish was in Melbourne for the OzBio2010 meeting.



### Dr Benjamin Kile named 2010 Australian Life Scientist of the Year

The Bio21 Cluster would like to congratulate former UROP Committee Member Dr Ben Kile, Walter and Eliza Hall Institute, recently awarded the Federal Science Minister's Prize for Life Scientist of the Year, 2010. Ben has been a very active supporter of UROP and was the first UROP supervisor in Victoria. More details at the [WEHI website](#).



### Sir John Monash Fellowship awarded to former UROP Student, Davis McCarthy

Congratulations also to Davis McCarthy, a former UROP student with the Bioinformatics Division at WEHI, who has been awarded a prestigious Sir John Monash PhD Scholarship. The scholarship will allow Davis to pursue his PhD studies at the University of California at Berkeley and the Cluster wishes him every success with his project.



#### Tell us More:

UROP students regularly obtain competitive scholarships. The Bio21 Cluster is always glad to hear of these successes – please contact the UROP office: [urop-bio21@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:urop-bio21@unimelb.edu.au)



## Graduate Award to Debbie Dorfan

Not only the UROP students, but also Bio21 Cluster staff are winning academic awards! Our warmest congratulations to Debbie Dorfan, UROP Administrative Assistant, who completed her Graduate Diploma in Knowledge and Information Management this year and took out the prize for best student, awarded by the Victorian libraries association (VARLA).



## Update on Victorian Platform Technologies Network

There are 100 facilities in the network across 30 or so institutions in Victoria, with 6 more identified in the Bio21 Cluster node in the pipeline for early in the New Year. It is the largest multidisciplinary biomedical core facilities network in the country and one of only a few multi-institutional efforts identified globally. Over 2010, we have run seven workshops for facility managers, presented at numerous conferences, produced publications and supported 12 facilities to present in the trade hall at OzBio2010. We have supported the launch of the [Victorian Bioportal](#), providing a means to present consistent information on each of the facilities, and we have produced our own [VPTN website](#), which offer facilities tools such as customised, free online event registrations and advertising, with more under development. The VPTN "Menu of Facilities" has been a great success throughout the year and is now available on our website.



In 2011, the VPTN focus will be on making sure facilities benefit from our activities and in continuing our drive to increase researchers' awareness of the comprehensive resources that are available across all institutions. A major focus will be in developing a software platform to integrate all aspects of core facilities' management, which can be applied across whole institutions. We have made significant early steps in this process and would welcome any contributions. Please contact Gerard for more information ([ggibbs@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:ggibbs@unimelb.edu.au)).



## Visitor: Dr Jonathan J Rosen, Boston University – September/October

In collaboration with the Bio21 Cluster, Dr Rosen visited Melbourne as VESKI's 9th International Connections Recipient. During the week a number of Bio21 Cluster, VESKI and BioMelbourne Network Melbourne-Boston connections were brought together to discuss collaborative opportunities. Dr Rosen gave a lecture at the Bio21 Institute, University of Melbourne, on "The role of student mentoring in accelerating new venture formation" and participated in the UROP forum with Professor Harvey Lodish.



## Bio21 Cluster AGM: New Bio21 Cluster Website Launched on 1 October

Dr Rosen attended the Cluster's AGM where he, at the click of the mouse, launched the new Bio21 Cluster web site – [www.bio21.com.au](http://www.bio21.com.au). Dr Elizabeth Johnson demonstrated the website and provided a brief overview adding that it was designed to be a practical and useful resource for Members. It is hoped that people who are not yet aware of the Bio21 Cluster will be able to find helpful resources, be able to cross communicate and become involved in events, etc. The site includes an online booking system for Bio21 Cluster events.

## New Associate Member

We are delighted to welcome the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre (Victorian CCC) to the Bio21 Cluster. The Victorian CCC will be the first of its kind in Australia, integrating cancer care and research to facilitate better outcomes for patients. Deputy Chair of the Victorian CCC Board, Dr George Morstyn presented to the Cluster's Scientific Advisory Council, outlining the vision for this exciting seven-partner collaboration. While major building works commence on the former Dental Hospital site in Grattan St, collaborative activities among the partners are already under way.



## Welcome and Farewell

Professor Arthur Shulkes was welcomed back to the Cluster's Scientific Advisory Council (SAC) as the University of Melbourne's representative. Arthur replaces Professor Peter McIntyre, whom we sincerely thank for his contributions to the SAC.

We also thank Professor Kathryn McGrath, Independent Board Member, who resigned due to work commitments.

## “Women in the Scientific Research Workforce: Identifying and Sustaining the Diversity Advantage”

Following the successful forum held in March on gender equity in the scientific workforce, discussions with Professor Sharon Bell (pictured), LH Martin Institute, have led to the Bio21 Cluster's partnership in an ARC Linkage Grant application. The study, to be led by the LH Martin Institute, aims to discover the underlying reasons for women's lack of progression to senior scientific appointments and to identify issues for both women and men in the sector. A greater understanding of the workforce will be critical to future workforce planning for our Member organisations and the sector in general. The other partner in the project is the Royal Australian Chemical Institute. Results of the application are expected in May 2011.



## Recent Presentations about the Bio21 Cluster

Dr Stella Clark, Dr Elizabeth Johnson and Dr Gerard Gibbs made presentations to the following organisations providing them with overall information about the Cluster, UROP and the VPTN:

- AustinLifeSciences Board
- Epworth Hospital Senior Management
- DIISR Research Infrastructure Forum
- OzBio2010 National Conference, Melbourne
- Three separate presentations at the Knowledge Cities 2010 World Summit held in Melbourne

## Advocacy

Dr Stella Clark and Professor Jock Findlay signed off on a letter to Senator Kim Carr in support of the International Science Linkages Program that assist scientists develop overseas collaborations. Dr Clark met with Dr John Byron, Senior Adviser (Science and Research), to the Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research. Member organisations are encouraged to write to Senator Carr in support of this scheme.

## STOP PRESS!!

Congratulations to Bio21 Cluster Member organisations who are part of two newly announced health related CRCs:

- The \$27 million CRC for Young People, Technology and Wellbeing will study how technology can help prevent and treat mental illness in our youth.
- The \$23 million CRC for Mental Health will develop better diagnostic tools for Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease and Schizophrenia and contribute to better treatment.