

February 29th, 2008

Dr. Rafael Palacios.
Coordinator
Undergraduate Program on Genomic Sciences.
National Autonomous University of Mexico

Dear Dr. Palacios:

I am writing this letter in support of the Undergraduate Program on Genome Sciences, National Autonomous University of Mexico. On April 3rd 2006, I was invited to present a seminar in the "Frontiers of Genomics Lecture" series which was organized and hosted by students from that program. I spent considerable time meeting with the students and discussing the training program and their different independent research projects. Since that time, I have hosted one of the students in my laboratory and have communicated with others regarding both graduate school and research. I am, therefore, qualified to comment on both the scientific quality of the program and the caliber of the students.

First, I would like to commend you on the undergraduate program in genome sciences that you have established. This is a very unique program which combines a critical basic understanding of biochemistry, cell biology, programming, statistics and molecular biology with more advanced concepts within the field of genomics. It is an intensive curriculum designed to arm students with not only the necessary knowledge to become competent scientists but also to provide them with extensive practical experience. The training program culminates in a series of independent research projects and exposure to different research environments. Encouraging students to perform internships in other laboratories, not only builds ties with other universities but exposes them to different research paradigms. Consequently, unlike traditional undergraduate program centered around course work and laboratories, this program provides a true "taste" of basic research in the field of genomics. It is clear that such students have an advantage when considering graduate school.

Of course students are the most important testament to the success of an undergraduate program such as this. It would be an understatement to say that I was extremely impressed by the students with whom I have interacted. During my presentation, for example, they asked insightful questions and showed a command of the major issues of both human genomics and genetics. Subsequent to my visit one of your students, Tzitziki Lemus Vergara, completed an 8-week internship within my laboratory last year. I assigned her the difficult task of assessing copy-number difference of a segmental duplication which is represented ~20 times within the genome. Her project entailed generating and comparing real-time QPCR data with oligonucleotide array comparative genomic hybridization established on a reference set of eight individuals. Her preliminary results were convincing that she had successfully detected copy-number difference of LCR16a in both normal and individuals with autism disease. Her work and performance can only be described in superlative terms. The amount and quality of data she generated on such a short time-frame was excellent. She made every effort to come early to the laboratory and stay late in order to generate results. She learned new techniques very quickly and interacted very well with laboratory staff. She was an absolute pleasure to

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have visit the laboratory. I would rate her performance as outstanding!

Based on my understanding of the program and my interaction with some of the students, I would rate your program among the best I have seen. I typically give 20 invited lectures per year and meet with students from many different programs across many different universities. Your students are the most competent and knowledgeable undergraduates I have yet to meet. In fact, their competence in genomics rivals that of many students enrolled in some first-year Ph.D. programs here in the United States. I am convinced that there are emerging leaders of genomics among these students. Given the right opportunities, I expect to see some of these as rising stars in the next few years.

I wish you all the best in the evaluation of your program. Keep up the great work!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Eichler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and a long, sweeping underline.

Evan Eichler, PhD

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