

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

Dear Dr. Palacios,

I am pleased to offer some of my views on the Program based upon my visit in February of 2007. As you'll recall, I gave a seminar and also met with the students fairly extensively.

I think this program would be distinctive and impressive at any institution including my own. We do not have anything quite like it, and as a consequence our students are not nearly as knowledgeable about genomics as the advanced students in your program. At Princeton David Botstein has established an undergraduate program where the students begin in the freshman year to study chemistry, physics, and mathematics using instructive examples from biology. This is the closest program I know to the one you have created. By integrating biological examples into the study of the physical sciences, students are prepared to bridge fields especially effectively. In thinking about what else could be added to your already fine curriculum, it occurred to me that some electives in biophysics and/or bioengineering might be useful.

The students I met during the visit were consistently impressive.

They were facile with the latest concepts in genomics and excited about the vast opportunities in this field. They were ambitious and confident. Their preparation means they could readily move into graduate programs in genomics at any university. The specialization of their training embodies a somewhat different approach than is typical in the U.S., where most of the undergraduate training is quite broad and therefore more shallow. For the students in the genomics program, that means that they are better prepared in science than typical U.S. undergraduates, but have less time to explore other areas. Based on talking with the students, I think it might be valuable to consider ways of incorporating a bit more depth in another area in addition to genomics, eg history or music or literature or economics. I expect that your own experience, like mine, is that writing and speaking clearly are integral parts of success in science. Work in these other fields will strengthen those skills.

In summary, then, I am highly impressed with the quality of the program you have built and with the training and intelligence of the students. I am glad I was able to visit and wish you the best of success with the program.

Sincerely,

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