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November 5, 2007

**BIOINFORMATICS RESEARCH TEAM AT RAMAPO COLLEGE
GARNERS MAJOR RECOGNITION**

(Mahwah) – Faculty and student collaboration on research projects at Ramapo College has resulted in nationally prestigious recognition for the college’s bioinformatics program.

Dr. Paramjeet S. Bagga, Ph.D., a professor of biology and convener of bioinformatics, and Dr. Lawrence D’Antonio, an associate professor of mathematics, mentored the students participating in the research.

Ramapo College students Melissa Hee Chung of Trinidad and Tobago, and Gadareth Higgs of the Bahamas, together with the professors, won first prize for their presentation, “G-Quadruplexes Are Conserved Near RNA Processing Sites of Proto-Oncogenes” at the Undergraduate Research Symposium held at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County in October. Another Ramapo College student, Aileen Tolentino of Old Bridge, New Jersey, also worked on this project. Bagga noted that oncogenes have many important functions in the cells and that alterations in their function usually lead to cancer.

The bioinformatics research team received additional accolades in October when a presentation, “Alternatively Process Sites in Apoptotic Genes Are Associated with Special G-Quadruplex Motifs” won first prize at the Metropolitan Association of College and University Biologists tri-state undergraduate research conference at St. John’s

(more)

University, NY. Ramapo College student Viktor Vasilev of Bulgaria presented the paper and was assisted with the project by the professors and another student, Oleg Kikin of Brooklyn, NY.

In addition, a research manuscript “GRSDB2 and GRS_UTRdb: Databases of Quadruplex Forming G-rich Sequences in pre-mRNAs and mRNAs,” co-authored by students Oleg Kikin and Zachary Zappala of Mahwah, along with Bagga and D’Antonio, was accepted into the peer-reviewed journal, *Nucleic Acids Research* (NAR), an Oxford University Press Journal. It is expected to be included in a special edition of the journal that is dedicated to bioinformatics databases scheduled for publication in January. Zappala, who is a student at Bergen Academies in Hackensack, has been participating in research projects at the college for the past year.

“This is very exciting for us because *Nucleic Acids Research* has worldwide distribution and is considered one of the foremost journals for this kind of research,” said Bagga.

Bioinformatics is a modern interdisciplinary science that uses computer based methods to study molecular biology. The information obtained by the application of this powerful new technology can be used to prevent, diagnose and treat inherited and other diseases, design new drugs and vaccines, shorten the development cycle of new medicines, among other applications.

Ramapo College is the first in New Jersey and one of the first primarily undergraduate colleges in the United States to offer a baccalaureate degree in bioinformatics. The bioinformatics major prepares students for obtaining employment in industry and academia, pursuing graduate education, careers in medicine and related disciplines, or engaging in research in this technological field of great demand. Please visit <http://bioinformatics.ramapo.edu/> for more information.

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