



NEWS RELEASE

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Bioinformatics conference aims to foster relationships

Practitioners combine IT, biology to tackle deluge of scientific data

Columbus, Ohio (June 10, 2010) – Researchers, educators and students from government, industry and universities across Ohio and the Midwest will be converging on Columbus next week to discuss bioinformatics, the relatively young field of scientific study that combines information technology and the biological sciences.

The Fifth Annual Ohio Collaborative Conference on Bioinformatics (OCCBIO) will be held at the Ohio Union on the main campus of The Ohio State University June 15-17. The conference will provide an interdisciplinary forum for discussing approaches, research findings and educational experiences arising from computational investigations of biological problems.

Next year, the conference returns to Athens, Ohio, where the inaugural conference was held in 2006. Other conferences were held in Oxford (2007), Toledo (2008) and Cleveland (2009). The 2011 version of OCCBIO will become the Great Lakes Bioinformatics conference to expand involvement to a larger audience.

An important goal of the conference continues to be fostering long-term collaborative relationships among practitioners in the field. The three-day meeting is designed for experts in bioinformatics, as well as non-experts who make substantial use of bioinformatics tools in their work, or would like to expand such use.

Over the past few decades, major advances in molecular biology and genomic technologies have led to an explosive growth in the biological information generated by the scientific community. This deluge of information led to the development of large, sophisticated computer databases to store, organize and index the data and for specialized tools to view and analyze the information.

A bottleneck in the analyses has developed, though, due to insufficient numbers of broadly educated and computationally skilled people who are able to understand the biological principles behind the data, engage in multi-disciplinary talk and generally make sense of the data being collected. The Ohio Bioinformatics Consortium, which supports OCCBIO, is striving to meet the demand by enhancing educational opportunities and research infrastructure. The consortium's goal is to make Ohio a world leader in bioinformatics and to facilitate new discoveries in data-intensive biomedical research.

Featured speakers for this year's conference will be:

- Ward Wheeler, Ph.D., curator of the Division of Invertebrate Zoology at the American Museum of Natural History;
- Wolfgang Sadee, Ph.D., Felts Mercer Professor of Medicine and Pharmacology at The Ohio State University;
- Frederick (Fritz) Roth, Ph.D., associate professor in the department of Biological Chemistry and Molecular Pharmacology at the Harvard Medical School;
- Mark Gerstein, Ph.D., the Albert L. Williams Professor of Biomedical Informatics, Molecular Biophysics & Biochemistry and Computer Science at Yale University; and
- Tim Hui-Ming Huang, Ph.D., professor in the department of Molecular Virology, Immunology & Medical Genetics - Human Cancer Genetics at The Ohio State University.

The 2010 conference is being sponsored by The Ohio State University Office of Research, The Ohio State University Medical Center's Department of Biomedical Informatics, the University of Akron, Diagnostic Hybrids – A Quidel Company, the Ohio Supercomputer Center and OARnet. For registration or additional information, please visit the OCCBIO web site at www.ohiobioinformaticsconsortium.org/2010/.

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