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Biocomplexity Faculty Search Committee  
c / o Prof. Rob de Ruyter van Steveninck  
Department of Physics  
Indiana University  
Swain Hall West 117  
Bloomington IN 47405-7105

Dear Search Committee,

I offer my strong recommendation for Dr. Cynthia Gibas, who is seeking a faculty position in your program. Cynthia joined our department just a few years ago (August 2000) and over a short period of time, has demonstrated a broad array of research talents, innovative teaching, and excellent citizenship.

Cynthia's research is collaborative, multifaceted and innovative. She is working at the interface between functional genomics (in several biological systems) and the tools needed to support genomics studies, including software design and the biophysics of microarray technology. Her capacity to move between bioinformatics and biophysics, and her understanding of cutting edge biology questions, including evolution and pathogen-host interactions to name two, make her an ideal individual for cross linking programs. Over the past three years, she has done just that, by developing some half-dozen major collaborations, several of which are now on the verge of major funding and results, including a grant from NIH that looks certain to be awarded. I am confident that these efforts will bear fruit and bring Dr. Gibas into the forefront of bioinformatics research.

Dr. Gibas is also an excellent graduate advisor, one of the best in our department of 40 faculty. One of her students completed a M.S. degree this past summer and has already published a paper in a peer-reviewed conference proceeding; an additional paper was submitted to Journal of Bacteriology. Cynthia has also recruited two PhD students, both of whom are making excellent progress. She also supervises about 2 to 3 undergraduate researchers each year, with good results in all cases.

The teaching contributions from Dr. Gibas have been significant. She developed a two-course sequence in bioinformatics (3 credits each) that is open to both graduate and undergraduate students. These courses are new to our curriculum and are important to the future of our department and college. More impressive is the fact that Dr. Gibas has authored one of the only textbooks available world-wide for the computer side of bioinformatics.

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In the area of leadership and service, Cynthia has been superb. She served on a university steering committee to set up a campus-wide Graduate Program in Bioinformatics and Computational Biology, and she has since served in the selection of the first two waves of recruits. Thanks in no small part to Cynthia's leadership, this program, in just its second year, is enormously successful. The quality and quantity of graduate student applicants has grown by an order of magnitude. Cynthia has also served on a campus-wide seminar committee and on the most labor intense of our departmental committees. She has performed these tasks with energy, success, and without complaint. Dr. Gibas has also organized several workshops to help train people in bioinformatics methods.

Although Cynthia's research is highly interdisciplinary, having a group of colleagues doing similar kinds of research is a big advantage. Unfortunately for Cynthia, she is the sole person in our department with bioinformatics expertise, we are unlikely to hire in bioinformatics any time soon, and the Bioinformatics Institute at our university, ironically, has chosen to specialize in areas outside of Cynthia's main thrust. However, she has developed collaborations outside of Virginia Tech that make her, unfortunately for us, quite portable. Thus, I understand why she is looking into other opportunities.

Dr. Gibas clearly has all the tools to be a great success in a faculty position, and has developed to a point where I believe her research programs are taking off. I give you my unqualified recommendation and advise you to give Dr. Gibas very serious consideration.

Respectfully,



Robert H. Jones, Head  
Department of Biology