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Re: Recommendation for Faculty Position for Sujin Bao

Dear Search Committee,

November 7, 2005

This letter is to recommend Sujin Bao for a faculty position in your department. Sujin is spectacular, and he will make a terrific addition to your department. I give Sujin my absolutely highest recommendation.

You will no doubt receive many glowing letters and it is difficult to decide what measuring stick is used. I have had eight postdoctoral fellows including Sujin: four others have gone on to start their own laboratories; one is an official at the NSF, and three are in my laboratory. Sujin is arguably the best.

When I began working on patterning the *Drosophila* pupal eye many years ago, my goal was to answer a specific question: how did a group of support cells organize themselves around ommatidia to form a perfect hexagonal pattern? My laboratory has studied this for years, with many wrong turns (programmed cell death, etc.). Finally, Sujin came into my lab with a fresh pair of eyes and a keen intellect. He sized up the problem, reversed the direction in which we were going, and pulled me into thinking about adhesion and about simple physical properties of the cells. I cannot emphasize the remarkable insight that Sujin came to, really in spite of my own biases. His recent paper in *Developmental Cell*—nearly published in *Cell*, incidentally— is a watershed in my own career. My major contribution was to bring Sujin here to St. Louis. This paper is very thoughtful and, if you have time, worth the read. I am told it has remained for several months in the top ten read papers in *Developmental Cell*, a rare honor.

Sujin is one of those ambitious young postdocs who sees his goals clearly and is a finisher. In our discussions, I am impressed that he always has a clear view of where he is going and how to get there. When we discuss his progress, a wealth of data pours out nearly every time I ask a question; Sujin is typically two weeks ahead of my own thinking. Without belaboring the details, he took a project that was begun at least three years prior by another laboratory (as we later found out) and completed a *tour de force* and complete set of experiments in perhaps a year that has left even me gasping to keep

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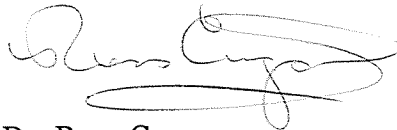
up. We have sent Sujin's reagent to this other laboratory, which is working on the problem. I will not describe his work in detail but only to note that Sujin has proposed (again Sujin, not I) a novel and important model for how segregating adhesive partners can drive fine epithelial patterning. This "Preferential Adhesion Model" is the culmination of truly important work, and Mal Steinberg himself (developer of the "Differential Adhesion Model") has been genuinely impressed with Sujin's work and his thinking.

I will honor Sujin's remarkable contributions to the laboratory by making sure he has plenty of freedom to operate on the issues of cell adhesion, cell junctions, and patterning. We have discussed his future plans in detail, and any work on the role of Roughest and Hibris in directing junctions will be left to Sujin. This is perhaps the most interesting aspect of the patterning, but Sujin has earned it in spades.

Finally, some notes on Sujin's personality. For someone as driven as Sujin, he is remarkably 'laid back'. Everyone in lab likes and highly respects Sujin. He is outgoing, has a wonderful sense of humor, and the type of personality that will attract good students and postdocs to him. To clarify my point that Sujin is the complete package, he is the first postdoc for whom I am working to get him hired here at the Medical School.

Sujin is impressive. He is thoughtful and great to chat with, and I always learn from our conversations. Bring him out, and I anticipate he will immediately stand out as a top candidate. I expect truly important work will come from his laboratory, and I cannot recommend him highly enough.

Sincerely yours,



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