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Monday, November 14, 2005

RE: Reference for Dr. Weiwen Zhang

Dear Mr. Bennet,

It is my pleasure to write a letter in connection with Dr. Zhang's application for the System Biology Faculty. I have the pleasure of working together on a daily basis with Dr. Zhang's in the Microbiology Group at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL).

I am microbiologist in the Biomolecular Systems Initiative at PNNL (<http://www.pnl.gov/main/sectors/fundamental.html>) whose main research interests are with the bioenergetics, microbial interactions and metabolism of anaerobic microorganisms (acetogens, sulfate reducers and methanogens) and the importance of these organisms in the global carbon cycling. During my career I became convinced that these microorganisms and the interactions between them are the key for the successful development of microbial energy production systems and this is currently a subject of special interest to me.

Dr. Zhang is an expert in bacterial genetics and his past research experiences include the extensive study on biosynthesis mechanisms of various polyketide antibiotics in soil Actinomycetes strains, and integrated transcriptomics and metabolomics study of yeast ergosterol metabolism. Furthermore he has an excellent publication record and several pending US patents. Currently Dr. Zhang and I collaborate on a project where we study syntrophic co-cultures. In syntrophic cultures two microorganisms are mutually dependent on each other and our goal is to get a better fundamental understanding of this microbial interaction by studying the transcriptome and proteome of these microorganisms. Dr. Zhang's knowledge of integrated transcriptomics and proteomics shows to be a significant factor in our research to get a better understanding of syntrophic co-cultures.

The record of Dr. Zhang's achievements indicates that he has already made important contributions to the field of Environmental Microbiology and Microbial Physiology, and based on that record, we certainly can assume that he will continue to do so. Accordingly, Dr. Zhang is a prime candidate for the position and I fully support his application. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require further comment.

Yours faithfully,

Johannes Scholten Ph.D.
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