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Dear Dr Brun and the members of the Faculty Search Committee,

It is with great pleasure that I write in support of Dr. Eric Stewart's application for a tenure track faculty position in Microbiology. Dr. Stewart has spent the last five years as a post-doc in our laboratory where he has studied aging and death of *Escherichia coli*. For this project he developed an automated time-lapse microscopy system coupled with computerized analysis to follow all the descendents of single growing cells. The results of this study, which was published in PloS Biology in 2005, have generated considerable interest in the wider scientific community, as judged by numerous commentaries in Science and Nature News, as well as many requests for collaboration. His fascinating project has broken new ground in microbiology, and it extends beyond the phenomenon of microbial aging to asymmetric divisions, phenotypic variability, and noise and stochasticity. This has taken him into the complex realm of where standard inputs (i.e. constant genotype and environment) yield radically diverging output (phenotype).

During this period, I got the opportunity to appreciate Dr. Stewart as one of the best young investigators in the field of Microbiology that I have met during my career. His creativity, originality and taste for new ideas are impressive. He has a critical scientific sense and his integrity is unquestionable. Dr. Stewart is also a hard worker, as well as being efficient and always well organized. A number of students and others in our laboratory are now following projects that he made possible, and that he continues to help guide.

Now, Dr. Stewart is leading his own group in our laboratory as an INSERM (French National Institute of Health and Medical Research) Young Investigator. With his collaborators, he continues to work with *E. coli*, but also with other bacteria, where he is studying important developmental decisions in the context of above-mentioned phenomena. It is clear that he has the foresight to plan successful research projects, and the ability to train graduate students and postdocs in critical thinking and research.

Dr. Stewart has experience at writing competitive grants, not just at the level of postdoc fellowships, but also major project grants that fund operations and equipment in the laboratory as well. This experience, beyond that of the standard postdoc, means that he will have an advantage in securing funding to support his laboratory.

In conclusion, I think that he would make a great addition to microbiology in the Department of Biology and the Biocomplexity Institute at the University of Indiana. I am certain that he will be a successful researcher. He is great to interact with, whether in collaboration or just discussing science at lunch. He is very appreciated by the peers and staff in our Institute.

If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Ivan Matic