

October 21, 2005

Yves Brun
Systems Biology/Microbiology Faculty Search
Department of Biology
Indiana University
Jordan Hall 142, 1001 E 3rd Street
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Dear Dr. Brun:

I am writing to express my strongest possible support for Dr. Zhengchang Su's application for a position at your institution. It would appear that Dr. Su would be perfectly suited for this position considering his previous training in neurophysiology, patch clamp studies of CRAC/TRP channels and most recently bioinformatics. Su, supported by a prestigious grant from the C.C. Wu Foundation in Hong Kong, came to the U.S. in 1994 to study in my laboratory. After working for a year as a research associate, he entered our graduate program and received a Ph.D. in Physiology and Biophysics in July 2000. His Ph.D. dissertation involved characterizing and understanding store-operated ion channels, which are involved in many important diseases such as diabetes and AIDS, in nonexcitable cells. He developed an expertise in cell culture, patch clamping, and ionic imaging and gained the ability to study the function of a single molecular complex in real time. In addition, he became one of the world's best young electrophysiologists in terms of studying Ca^{2+} channels in immune cells. His doctoral research has been published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (USA), Journal of Biological Chemistry, American Journal of Physiology, and Federation of American Societies of Experimental Biology (FASEB) Journal, Biophysical Journal, and has been presented in professional conferences in China and the United States. After completing his Ph.D., I encouraged Su to remain as a postdoctoral fellow in my laboratory to complete some other studies he had been involved in and to bring to fruition some additional publications. He graciously agreed and was an outstanding postdoc.

In terms of my overall evaluation, I have trained over ten Ph.D. students and interacted with many more and Su is one of the top two I have encountered in my career. He has an unusual capacity to generate highly original ideas, understand complex scientific issues and work extremely hard and effectively. These qualities have made him a truly outstanding young scientist.

On a personal basis, Su is a joy to work with. He has a keen sense of humor, a helpful attitude, and an ability to get along well with others. He really adds something to a lab group in terms of his intellectual and personal interactions with others, myself included.

For some time, Su had an interest in the areas of genomics and protein structural predictions with a long-term goal of applying it to his expertise in biophysics. To this end, he of his own initiative and with my blessings, took a number of upper level computer programming courses. This led him to embark on two very successful postdoctoral fellowships in structure prediction and bioinformatics with Dr. Stephen C. Harvey and Dr. Ying Xu. He would now appear to be poised to establish an independent, externally funded research program. Considering his past accomplishments, keen intellect, and self-motivation, I can assure you that he would be an outstanding faculty member. Perhaps my greatest recommendation is that I hated to see him leave my group and he was and is sorely missed. If I can provide further information about Dr. Su, please don't hesitate to call.

Sincerely yours,

J. Edwin Blalock, Ph.D.
Professor

JEB/dw