

Humans & SynBio: An iGEM Human Practices Invitation

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Abstract

This year, the Cornell iGEM team has created an outreach project called Humans & SynBio, found at facebook.com/HumansandSynBio, loosely based on the popular photoblog Humans of New York. Our hope is that H&SB can be a collaborative project that brings iGEM teams in touch with their communities, and puts the views of the community in touch with other communities via social media. To this end, we're opening up submissions to all iGEM teams and have thus prepared this document. We're very excited to be working with you - if you have any questions, please direct your correspondence to jdf256@cornell.edu.

1 Introduction

Essentially, Humans & SynBio (hereafter H&SB) is a series of posts on Facebook, each of which has three parts: a location, a transcript, and a photo. In order to submit approved content to H&SB you will need to provide these three separate parts, as well as confirmation that the person(s) you interviewed granted your organization and Cornell iGEM the right to share the submitted transcript and image.

2 How to get involved

If you are interested in participating in H&SB, we ask that you submit your posts in one of two ways: by e-mail to jdf256@cornell.edu or via Facebook message to Humans & SynBio. Please include location, a transcript (either typed up in the style of the other posts page or a sound file of decent quality - smartphone microphones held at arm's distance work fine for this), and a high-quality vibrant photo. We will then confirm receipt and notify you of your post's publication. If you would like to be tagged or credited in a certain way for your submission in the post itself, please indicate this clearly.

2.1 How to interview

First you should introduce yourself and make your affiliations to your iGEM host institution and team clear. We find that asking for a 2-3 minute interview and a photo is a good way to start and gives folks a chance to refuse participation. After this, a brief explanation of your team, project, or synthetic biology

in general helps set up the casual, open-ended tone of the interview. Usually, we follow this up with a question about the interviewee's impression/past knowledge/general opinion of synthetic biology, and use this answer to learn more about how their views came to be. Some other interesting topics include: what is your dream application of synthetic biology? What are the moral or ethical issues associated with synthetic biology? More general questions about the impact of biological science and technology on individuals and society also tend to produce unique, evocative, and interesting responses. Please remember to receive permission in the form of a (preferably) written waiver, or a webform, recording, etc.

2.2 Waiver Sample

I, the undersigned, grant consent for myself to be photographed for Cornell University iGEM's (Cornell iGEM) Humans of SynBio. I authorize Cornell iGEM to publish such photography and portions of any related transcripts on the Cornell iGEM webpage and on Facebook/Twitter. I understand that for this consent to be revoked I must contact Cornell iGEM by e-mail with sufficient information to identify the photographic/textual materials associated with myself/my child(ren).

This consent shall not allow any further publication without my advance written permission.

3 Have Fun!

We've had a great time going out into our community and soliciting a wide range of opinions on synthetic biology, genetic engineering, and the interaction between science, politics, the arts, culture, and more. Please remember to thank your interviewees for their generosity with their time and opinion, and most importantly: have fun!