

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE BIOTECH CENTER

March 2009

Faculty Activities and Accomplishments

Professor Ilya Raskin and his team hosted a student March 2-6, 2009 from Rhodes University, South Africa for training through the GIBEX program. Dr. Gili Joseph trained Candice Bromely to perform 10 Screens-to-Nature assays, and Dr. Slavik Dushenkov taught data management for the database operations. Candice is a student of Professor Mike Davies-Coleman, the Head of the Department of Chemistry at Rhodes University. His program will use GIBEX screens to study biological activity of extracts from marine organisms. GIBEX (Global Institute for BioExploration) was established by Dr. Raskin to promote equitable and sustainable pharmacological bioexploration to benefit human health and the environment in developing countries.

Conferences, Seminars, and Other Events

Eric Lam attended the Sun Grant Initiative Energy Conference held at Washington D.C. March 10-13 and presented a lecture entitled "Making more fermentable feedstocks (Smart Plants) via genetic engineering." He fielded questions from the audience as well as from a reporter of ClimateWire, a DC-based news group on climate related issues. Topics discussed included the prospects and progress using plant genetic engineering as an approach to minimize the cost and carbon footprint for cellulosic biofuel production. The Sun Grant Initiative is a national network of land-grant universities and federally funded laboratories working together to further establish a biobased economy. It is primarily funded through the U.S. Department of Transportation, with substantial funding support from the Department of Energy and the Department of Agriculture. Gerben Zylstra gave the keynote presentation at the Symposium on Frontiers in Environmental Microbiology: A Caribbean Perspective at the Universidad del Turabo in Puerto Rico March 20. The title of his presentation was "Oxygenase gene biodiversity in the environment." The conference was sponsored by NSF and the International Society for Microbial Ecology (ISME).