

Chemistry Biology Interface Forum (CBiF) Executive Annual Report to RSC Council 2007-2008

Purpose of paper: This paper sets out the Annual Report of the CBiF Executive for the year ending at the 2008 RSC AGM.

RSC Strategic Imperatives: CBiF's activities cover RSC High Level Objectives (HLO): 1. Increase our influence in key decision making bodies, and 2. Broaden our science base.

CBiF Strategy: Strategy is set out in the CBiF Strategy 2007-2010 document which is available on the Forum's web page at http://www.rsc.org/images/CBiF%20Strategy%202007-2012_tcm18-95549.pdf

The CBiF currently has 2.811 members¹ based in industry and education. Its main objective is to build upon an RSC presence in the chemistry-biology interface by promoting the critical contribution that the chemical sciences can make to challenges in the biological sciences and addressing complex problems in bridging the chemistry-biology interface.

Highlights:

'Face to Face: UK Chemistry Biology Interface' (funded by EPSRC, BBSRC MRC and Wellcome Trust). CBiF report launched 26 June 2008 www.rsc.org/face-to-face

Tissue Engineering Workshop July 2008. *Joint Materials Chemistry Forum initiative.*

One day meeting was held in November 2007 to discuss the research problems and opportunities in tissue engineering, and facilitate cross communication between chemists, biologist, engineers and medics. As a result of the interest generated from this meeting, a scoping workshop is being organised to outline the chemical science priorities for tissue engineering.

Analytical tools for the life sciences (ATLS). *Joint Analytical Division/ Analytical Trust Fund*

- Oxidative damage: 28th March 2008 at the Dublin City University.
- Biological membranes: 2nd June 2008 at University of Edinburgh. *Joint Biochemical Society.*
- Genomic medicine: first week in September in London. *Joint Biochemical Society.*

<http://www.rsc.org/ConferencesAndEvents/RSCEvents/SciencePolicyEvents/ATLS/index.asp>

Chemistry in the New World of Bioengineering and Synthetic Biology 22 – 24 September 2008

www.rsc.org/chembio08

CBiF Lecture tour

A lecture tour for world leading scientist working at the interface between chemistry and biology. Prof John Vederas (Alberta) has accepted an invitation to give a lecture tour to four UK universities in September.

ChemCareers2007: Careers at the Chemistry – Biology Interface

Satellite seminar at ChemCareers 2007, focused specifically on opportunities for chemists in life science research and promote the importance of cross disciplinary research. Presentations featured working at 'the interface' in industry by Ray Elliott, Syngenta and working in an SME by Felicity Sartain, Smart Holograms. Seminar scheduled for ChemCareers2008

KPIs:

- Raising the profile of the RSC chemistry biology interface community (ongoing)
- Deliver CBiF report: 'Face to Face: UK Chemistry Biology Interface' (completed)
- The establishment of a series of workshops (3) addressing priority areas for chemistry biology interface research (completed)

Issues:

Recommendation from the CBiF report 'Face to Face: UK Chemistry-Biology Interface' states that the RSC should '*enable those working at the chemistry-biology interface to become members of the RSC*'. There is a perception by the chemistry-biology interface community that they are unable to become members of the RSC. CbiF recommend that the possibility of providing joint membership between the RSC and Biochemical Society (approx membership 7,000) should be explored, in order to open membership to biologists interested in the chemical sciences.

¹ As of end of 2007 <http://intranet/socinfo/dept/membadmin/monthlyreps/2007/anrep.pdf>

Financial details:

Budget year 2008 is £ 102 k

Projected budget 2009 is £ 113 k

Future plans:

Significant actions identified following recommendations made in the CBiF report 'Face to Face: UK Chemistry-Biology Interface':

1. International comparison

Given the economic importance of research at the chemistry biology interface, and reviewing the UK's competitive standing in particular with the US, CBiF plans to explore the possibility of conducting a deeper review of interdisciplinary science, focusing on cultural distinctions between the UK and US research in universities. This would be beneficial in assisting funders and research institutions to identify key areas for support and development.'

2. Interdisciplinary training

The RSC should expand its contributions to bio interface-specific courses for graduates (e.g. summer schools). Proposed mechanism for support outlined in appendix a.

3. Regional Workshops

CBiF to support regional workshops (providing up to £2000 in sponsorship) that identify opportunities and challenges, promote discussion and collaboration in key areas of the chemistry biology interface, whilst aiming to enhance local research communities.

Objectives of workshops:

- Showcase current leading-edge research at the interface
- Brings together biologists and chemists, as well as engineers and physicists from a region,
- Create new opportunities for learning, exchange of ideas and partnerships.
- Ensure titles for joint events are welcoming for those from both disciplines
- Rep's from funding bodies and learned societies invited by RSC to co-badge
- Provide an opportunity for a communication programme between funding bodies and research community, to disseminate information on funding schemes.

4. RSC Membership for interdisciplinary scientists

To explore the possibility of joint membership between the RSC and Biochemical Society

Budget:

Name	2008 budget/£k	2009 budget/£k
Overheads	47,000	47,000
Workshop costs	18,500	30,500
Printing and postage costs	1,500	1,500
Member and other travel expenses	5,000	5,000
Projects	30,000	30,000
Total	102,000	113,500

Professor John McCarthy
Chair, Chemistry Biology Interface Forum
9 July 2008