

Statement of interest to serve as a board member of the Open Bioinformatics Foundation

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Professional history and goals: I am an Associate Professor at Iowa State University. Prior to that I held the position of Assistant professor At Miami University, Ohio, and a Programmer Analyst at University of California San Diego.

I received my PhD from the Hadassah Medical School at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and postdoctoral training at the Burnham Institute (now: Sanford Burnham Prebys), La Jolla, California, USA. I have [published over 60 papers](#) in the field of computational biology, and have served the community of computational biology in a variety of roles, as elaborated below. My research interests include genome evolution in bacteria, computational protein function prediction, and protein function annotation and data management.

If elected to the OBF board, I will serve in whatever roles would be required of me. I would be specifically interested in expanding the ability of the OBF to provide educational and training resources, as well as increasing engagement with trainees and educators worldwide.

I have been attending BOSC meetings since the year 2000, and have engaged with the OBF over the past 20 years in various capacities. I believe that my service as an ISCB board member, as well as being a faculty member and, historically, a contributor to Biopython, place me in a good position to serve as an OBF board member.

Contribution to Open Source and Open Science efforts: I have a strong record of contribution to the bioinformatics open-source community. As a graduate student, I was one of the first contributors to the Biopython project starting in 1999, eventually managing its releases in 2005-2006 and co-authoring the highly-cited paper published in 2009. As a graduate student, postdoc, and principal investigator, I have consistently advocated for the use of FOSS licensed software in my work and the work of the people I worked with, as well as licensed all products I worked on as FOSS. As a departmental representative to my college's Library committee, I have educated students and faculty about the merits of publishing Open Access, the advantages of pre-publication using preprint archives, and have pushed for college and university funding for open-access publication fees.

Other contributions to the bioinformatics community: in addition to my and my group's research and scientific publications, I have founded the Automated Function Prediction SIG (later, function COSI) in 2005. The Function COSI brings together computational biologists, experimental biologists and biocurators who are dealing with gene and gene product function

prediction, to share ideas and create collaborations. The Function COSI holds annual meetings and conducts the multi-year Critical Assessment of protein Function Annotation, or CAFA, experiment. More can be found here: <https://www.biofunctionprediction.org/>

Contributions to the International Society of Computational Biology: I served as an ISCB board member in the years 2016-2022. As a board member I have implemented the ISCB student software prize and paper prize, which were designed together with members of the OBF. If elected as an OBF board member, I intend to further pursue the implementation of this prize, which provides a means to engage students with the OBF and the ISCB.

Diversity statement: (1) I am a member of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee in the College of Veterinary Medicine at Iowa State University. Specifically, I am on the accessibility sub-committee which seeks to improve access for staff and visitors with health conditions or impairments to the college and the animal hospital. This includes making our websites accessible, as well as providing translation services for the animal hospital clients. (2) I was the principal investigator of an NSF grant whose goal was to sustain and grow a community of scientists who are working on the problem of computational function prediction. The award set aside money that was used for visiting students from US historically black and underrepresented universities to receive summer training in computational biology, and to travel to the ISMB to participate in the annual meeting of the Function COSI. We have engaged 5 minority students over the 3 years of the grant in this program, using all the resources provided by the NSF for this purpose. (3) I served as the co-chair of the ISMB 2022 conference. This was a particular challenging event to manage, as we wanted to make ISMB as safe and as inclusive as possible to all, at the time when in-person conferences were coming back. As co-chair, I insisted that masking should be mandatory to provide a safe environment, and that the conference shall be held in a hybrid form to be as inclusive as possible, as the inability to travel to an in-person conference disproportionately affects people from the global south, minorities, and people with disabilities, a particularly poignant issue during the COVID pandemic.

I hope I have made a good case for serving as a member of the OBF board, and I would be honored to serve if elected.