

IGERT Inquirer
Vol. 2, Issue. 4
Week of October 11, 2004

Inquirer Statement

The *Inquirer* was originally designed as part of the WSU-IGERT Summer Internship program. This document's main purpose was to inform readers about policies and issues related to this summer project. Clearly, communication was vital to the development of an effort such as the WSU-IGERT Internship program. With the success of the *Inquirer*, it was decided that the format of the *Inquirer* would be changed to a monthly, year round component. Moreover, it was decided that the scope of this document would be changed to reflect the activity of the WSU-IGERT program in high performance computing and simulation in its entirety. Thereby, evolving into a resource that can be used by a larger audience.

With this in mind, the *Inquirer* will target text that introduces its readers to the highlights of some of the accomplishments of its members. It would also inform readers about the structure of WSU-IGERT. The *Inquirer* will look to become a feedback mechanism relative to policy, course work and most importantly, promoting the concept of "Interdisciplinary research."

Suggestions on Co-advisor selection

One of the critical decisions facing an IGERT fellow in the Wayne State University program is the selection of a co-advisor. Within the structure of the program, a co-advisor can be just as important as the fellow's primary advisor in terms of the progression of the research and its quality. If selected by the student properly, a co-advisor can definitely add to the research experience of the fellow.

What are the qualities a fellow should look for when selecting a co-advisor? Who should have insight to the fellow's selections process? All of these questions may give rise to a formal structure, yet the selections of a co-advisor may not need to be all that formal to be successful. Well, the answer truly lies in the research and the relationships a fellow has with his primary research advisor. The primary research advisor can provide a fellow with a "research vision." Of course, most of the fellows coming into the program should have a research vision. Having a research vision and knowing your contributions to the groups investigation is key. A WSU-IGERT fellow looking to select a co-advisor must be able to understand the fundamentals associated with the research and must be committed to the science and its principles. Hence, as a fellow gains this foundation, a potential source may be the first or second year course instructors.

Additionally, a good format for the selection of the co-advisor may be to take on the structure as that in the selection of a primary advisor. A fellow could research the co-advisors research interest, talk to members of their research group, and/or attend seminars and/or group meetings after initial interest has been made. Furthermore, if your primary advisor is collaborating with faculty on campus this may be a potential resource of a co-advisor. The benefit of having a primary advisor and consulting with this person clearly is invaluable. Moreover, dialogue with the primary advisor can establish criteria and set the tone as it relates to expectations of the co-advisor. After all, in a sense, the co-advisor can contribute significantly to your research interest if they are accessed properly.

What are the attributes a fellow should seek when searching for a co-advisor? Simply stated, if a student wants to really enhance their research experience they should select a co-advisor who will contribute to their research goals. The co-advisor should be met with on a consistent basis and become a resource in the fellow's quest to produce quality research. The co-advisor should add value to the already solid science the fellow is undertaking. The co-advisor should be able to communicate their expectations clearly and should also be able to maintain a productive relationship with your primary advisor.

Within a graduate research career there is a number of ups and downs students may experience. A devastating scenario for a fellow who has selected a co-advisor would be if this student changes research groups. Again, the key is communication and commitment to the research. A fellow needs to communicate with graduate students outside of the group who have similar interest, as well as engage in dialogue with members of their group. As the research experience becomes productive, chances of students changing groups will diminish. Hence, the selection of a good co-advisor will decrease the likelihood of a change in research group.

In this writer's opinion, the addition of the co-advisor to the WSU-IGERT protects the fellows' interest. As the philosophies and the knowledge of an interdisciplinary research gains momentum, all involved will benefit. It is up to the WSU-IGERT fellows to seek out those visionaries who can provide "value add" to their research.

First orientation on the books

On a Friday in mid-September, a group comprised of WSU-IGERT fellows, interested students, staff, and interested faculty as well as WSU-IGERT faculty spent the day defining interdisciplinary studies, its benefits and some of the challenges that face the program. This event was co-sponsored by the student support group of the WSU-IGERT program (WIGSCO) and the programs recruitment and retention committee.

The purpose of this event was to introduce interdisciplinary research to interested students and faculty. Another goal of this event was to set the tone in terms of the level of expectation of incoming WSU-IGERT fellows along with defining the interdisciplinary research. Lastly,

the group wanted to offer a forum where students, faculty and administrators could come together as a group and discuss similar interest.

The format of the program was to have a series of panel discussions related interdisciplinary research. Panels consisting of 3 –4 speakers presented an extremely fundamental presentation about their research. A questions and answers period followed each group's final presenter.

Some of the benefits of interdisciplinary was evident, the quality of the research. The scope of the research interest within the Wayne State program was impressive. Research interests ranged from work over at the medical school to homeland security related issues being addressed the college of engineering. Naturally, a large benefit of the WSU program is the stipend. The knowledge associated with an interdisciplinary research appointment is different. It was made clear that while the courses that are the core of the WSU-IGERT program much of the interdisciplinary subject matter needed is gained outside of the classroom in the form of seminars, working along side persons with the needed skill set and attendance to conferences in order to present or to interact with attendees. There are over 100 IGERT programs that currently exist across the country. Ultimately, the goal of the program at Wayne State is to become one of the premier institutions students can attend and get a solid, and quality experience if their interest lies in the area of high performance computing and computer simulation.



Table Discussion at Orientation

There are a number of challenges associated with the interdisciplinary studies. The drive for FTE (full time enrollment) does not provide a mechanism to get courses with multiple instructors cross- referenced. Also, the research interests associated with the program at Wayne may be so vast that 4 –5 core courses may not provide students with the needed foundation to excel. Ideally, university interdisciplinary research supported in a “stand alone” facility would provide a research experience, which would impact positively in a significant way to the quality of the science. However, for this to happen a significant amount of success

as it relates to the production, quality and a greater acceptance of interdisciplinary philosophies would need to be embraced by the university administration.

Student Seminars Fall '04

The list of fellows will be presenting seminars in the months of September and October on the followings dates. See below.

DATE	PRESENTER
10/8/04	Jason Caravas - "Designing 'universal' primers for the Dipteran mitochondrial genome"
10/22/04	Yugang Xiao
11/5/04	JP Walters
11/19/04	John Knox – Recent research

The seminars will be held on Fridays in 313 State Hall from 1:00P to 2:00P. If fellows would like to have the titles of their presentations added to this text please send them to Keith Williams at kbw@chemwayne.edu.

Profile of Persons in WSU-IGERT

Readers can feel free to introduce themselves to WSU-IGERT by answering a series of questions.

1). What do you think in the most important discovery in the last 50 years?

The refinement of computers

2). The quickest way to lose your attention is to ...

Not be attentive when a question is asked

3). What is your favorite sport

American football

4). What is your favorite movie?

A Beautiful Mind

5). What is your favorite Motown group?

Jackson 5

6). Name your favorite Detroit landmark?

Joe Louis' Fist (Downtown)

7). What is your favorite restaurant in the Detroit?

Z's Place

Please send responses to Darryl Gardner at darryl@wayne.edu

Solicitation

Anyone who has "items of interest" to share with the rest of the group is encouraged to send a note to Doris King so that the information can be submitted or the issues can be addressed. We are especially looking to inform fellows about various activities such as additional seminars, workshops, and conferences that would enhance their research experience.

The *Inquirer* looks to not only inform, but also to become a vehicle to be used by faculty, staff, associates, supporters and fellows to improve the overall program. Hence, we welcome any feedback that may arise from this text. All views will be evaluated and posted.

Next Month's issue

The *Inquirer* is getting geared up for mid-semester. Next month the *Inquirer* hopes to bring news to its readership about the next IGERT social. Also, the next in a series of WSU-IGERT profiles will be featured. The *Inquirer* will post various deadline dates and advise readership of significant occurrences within the WSU-IGERT structure.