

Intern Exit Interview Summary SoCal BSI 2003

Comments are from 13 interns interviewed for 20 minutes each during the last week of the program and 2 sets of anonymous comments submitted by program interns through the Web A+E site, for a total of 15 sets of intern comments – numbers indicate the number of sets of comments that identified the issue indicated in bold, comments regarding specific issues within each domain follow

**1) What part of the SoCal BSI Program met or exceeded your expectations?
Please explain why or how.**

11 Didactic training – biology training, “good programming review though seemed like lots of work at the time”, good background to project, “learned a lot, though not used in my project”, phylogenetics and probability workshops, interesting and I learned a lot, informative and interesting, introduction to various tools useful, programming projects helped us understand the correlation between computer science and biology

6 Didactic faculty – extremely patient, supportive, helpful, really liked instructors, programming instruction began with basics and built from there – statistics workshop started that way, but suddenly the presentation level was well above my understanding

6 Overall program and its organization – “great experience”, learned a lot and met great people, “great idea to have this institute”, very impressive, good relationship between the didactic and research phases, better than most programs, knew schedule and expectations ahead of time, having an internship versus just didactic instruction

5 Friday meetings – pulled things together, mentors’ talks gave broad view of the field, very useful, very helpful for professional development, “helped us to understand that “problems” are normal”

4 Choice of internship site

4 Overall experience at internship site – enjoyed, liked people and location

3 Research mentors – impressed with quality, mentors at ViaLogy were helpful and supportive, very helpful and spent time with us

2 Beach party – fun, bonding experience

2 Development of friends/professional network – other interns through didactic training, program PIs and mentors

1 Compensation – very good relative to other programs

1 Student population – diverse, from across nation

1 Evaluation of the program

2) What part of the SoCal BSI Program disappointed you? Please explain your response and/or suggest ways to improve the program with respect to the issue that you have identified.

7 Didactic training – length of training and specific topics (microarrays, programming, statistics) assumed a certain background beyond what was reflected in the program application, so I struggled, biology lectures were not enough to bring me up to speed on this topic, not enough time to reflect on/internalize concepts from workshops, programming, microarray and statistics workshops need improvement, statistics workshop could have more practical, specific examples and have applied as well as theoretical information, would be useful to have more coverage of analysis of massive microarray data sets, could have used even more probability training, didactic phase not directly related to internship (only literature searches and NCBI databases), could increase in length – need more time to internalize concepts (ex. Microarrays, programming, statistics)

4 Process for choice of internship sites – hard to tell what each site had to offer, some inaccuracy in information supplied by program faculty, need time to visit internship sites, “I felt targeted due to prior experience into something I was not really interested in.” – maybe selection process happened too quickly, maybe have a chance to talk directly to mentors before assignment, need more information/details, need more detailed descriptions of projects

4 Arrangements for out of town students – no information about what to bring until ~1 week before program began, not clear that program was actually set up, housing arrangements - very stressful to move around so much, apartments without linens, dishes, etc. are problem if you arrive by plane, only 6 weeks of guaranteed housing stressful, interns tended to interact in “in-state versus out-of-state” cohorts

4 Stipend payments – variability week to week in amounts received, direct deposit (for out of town students) would be helpful, pay schedule erratic

3 Team design of internships - Competition among interns at worksite – “I versus we” attitude, but then the team process worked when the problem got more difficult, teaming on a programming project can be difficult, I didn’t get along with the other intern, perhaps we need help in dividing up the work/mentors need help in developing the teams

3 Internship organization – lack of support/organization at site, had to switch projects and lost time, “at this point in our careers we need more direction to get anything done”, felt wasted several weeks, “internship was not well planned, in contrast to the didactic phase”, “I wasted 2 weeks reading papers instead of doing actual work”

2 University visits – need more time to prepare, should get to choose versus being assigned

2 Internship length – longer would be better, “7 weeks is too short to accomplish anything significant” – would have liked time to explore the biological significance of the project

2 Friday sessions – unexpected obligations for Fridays during the internship put extra strain on my time, move these to Wednesday so we get a break in the middle of the week

2 Commute to internship site – 2 hour commute each way was a burden, lack of transportation for out of town students

2 Internship project - did not get to use math or statistics background in project, thought I would get experience in programming, but didn't – did not allow desired professional development

1 Lack of coverage in program office – please return calls in 24 hours or have message explaining office coverage

1 Selection criteria for interns – program assumed rich bioinformatics background not reflected in program application or intern selection criteria, produced uneven learning environment

1 Professional development sessions – should not assume that interns are all naïve undergraduates

1 Adapting to American culture – appreciated how open people in the company were about their feelings

3) Would you recommend the SoCal BSI Program to a friend? Please answer either NO, YES, or YES WITH RESERVATIONS. Please explain your response.

0 NO

9 YES, great for computer science people looking for applications in the sciences; particularly good if you want to learn about bioinformatics careers (4 interns say

this); to determine future career path or already know you want a career in bioinformatics; “great program and experiences”; “need hands on experience for the real world”; gives broad background in bioinformatics and biostatistics (2 interns note this); bioinformatics cannot be taught in solely a didactic fashion; most of my friends have the appropriate background and this gives a good summer “real world” experience in a company; professional network development

- 4 YES WITH RESERVATIONS**, due to identified program weaknesses, but would definitely recommend mentor who defined project at appropriate level; if you had a car and had never been to LA (to experience the city), but not until ~3rd year when all problems have been worked out; would not be appropriate without prior programming experience or if have already completed a significant bioinformatics project; need background in both computer science and biology

4) Do you have any other comments about the SoCal BSI Program that you would like to make at this time?

- very happy with whole “real life” experience despite “challenges”
- I wasn’t really sure what to expect at the beginning of the program.
- In the end, satisfied with internship experience (student did mention internship as weakness).
- Logical order of events (for the program), but could be expanded timeline
- “Reinforced my goal to work in the bioinformatics industry.”
- perhaps need to select more students from across the nation
- some interns might do better with a more structured first internship
- it would be nice to get to visit all internship sites before selecting one
- “overall a really good program”
- “Really good...really glad I did it, put together really well”