

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION / PROJECT / CONFERENCE

**Expedition/Project/
Conference Title:** iGEM 2023 Grand Jamboree

Travel Dates: 1th – 5th November

Location: Paris, France

Group member(s): Matthew Whitehead, Gabriel Espinoza Diaz

Aims: To present the results of our project at the iGEM 2023 Grand
Jamboree

Photography consent form attached: Yes
(please refer to your award letter) No

OUTCOME (a minimum of 500 words):-

During the 4 days of the conference, we had an incredible experience in attending a conference of that scale with hundreds of different projects and presentations. We spent a large amount of our time at the poster presentation, explaining our work, as well as familiarising ourselves with other teams' projects which encompassed all sorts of applications of engineering biology. We also successfully presented our project to a panel of judges as well as to judges during our poster presentation.

We began the conference with the poster presentations, Gabriel and I spent many hours over the course of the 4 days at the poster presentation explaining our project to attendees of all knowledge levels from high school students to experienced judges. I feel that we all very quickly got the hang of poster presentations and were all able to confidently explain our project and these are skills that we will be able to take forward in our careers. We also spent a great deal of time wandering the conference floor where hundreds of teams were also presenting their projects and we were able to speak to them, ask questions, and stay in contact with many of the people we met at the conference.

On the second day, we presented our project and answered questions in front of a panel of judges in our judging session, all of us had different focuses during the project and judges made sure to probe us on each aspect of our project giving each of us ample opportunity to respond to questions on the science and reasoning behind our experiment and project. For example I was focussed on directed evolution and human practices, and Gabriel had a lot of experience in modelling and wiki development. Over the course of the iGEM jamboree, a number of other conferences and panels were occurring. I found the iGEM responsibility conference to be particularly interesting with events focussed on science policy and communication. This conference helped me to understand how important policy and communication are for the implementation of science as well as regulations that support research. I have since gone on to incorporate this into my final year honours project.

There were also a number of stalls ran by businesses in the field ranging from biotech startups, to industry leaders like Ginko Bioworks and even the FBI. We all thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to speak to the staff members at these stalls understanding what it takes to work for these companies, and getting tips from people working in the industry.

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On the final day was the awards ceremony. In the end, our team performed very well, winning a gold medal. The judges were very interested in our project and in their feedback, they could see how much work we had put into developing each and every aspect of our project. We were particularly pleased with being nominated for best new basic part in the postgraduate section and winning the best biosafety and security award. These were incredibly exciting moments for us as the culmination of months of hard work from the entire team.

All in all, attending the iGEM grand jamboree equipped us with several skills including presentation, both in the judging panel and poster presentations as well as networking. Attending the iGEM grand jamboree is a requirement for winning medals and completing iGEM which will be fantastic to demonstrate to future employers or for applying to further education. For many of us, this would not have been possible without the James Rennie Bequest Fund, to which we are very grateful for this opportunity.