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Title

Synthetic biology: A global approach

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7jt9h6j1>

Journal

Nature, 510(7504)

ISSN

0028-0836

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Publication Date

2014-06-01

DOI

10.1038/510218c

Peer reviewed

Synthetic biology: a global approach

Despite some success in advancing best practices for synthetic biology in ethics, safety, security and the environment, the conversation about a global “tribal gathering” is only just beginning (see *Nature* **509**, 133; 2014).

In 2006, when the field was starting to appreciate the concepts and conditions for success, the Synthetic Biology Engineering Center (Synberc; www.synberc.org) was founded with support from the US National Science Foundation. It consisted of 20 investigators who helped to lay the foundations for synthetic biology at a time when tribalism probably still did us some good.

Synberc is now a singularly diverse tribe. It aims to examine the broad social context of biotechnology research practice through programmes that involve political scientists, legal scholars, ethicists, theologians, industrial practitioners, anthropologists and others, along with its own scientific advisory board.

We call for global expansion of the Synberc model into a more inclusive organization that is committed to advancing responsible scientific and social progress in synthetic biology. The main US funding agencies and their counterparts worldwide need to join with academics, industrial partners and society to support this long-term, internationally coordinated effort (see also V. ter Meulen *Nature* **509**, 135; 2014).

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**On behalf of 16 correspondents (see go.nature.com/bp83hq for full list).*