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Building an Interdisciplinary Institute: The Institute for Quantitative Biology at ETSU.

Because interdisciplinary collaborations are created jointly by faculty in different disciplines, the collaborative process requires a time-consuming, bottom-up approach in which the outcome is not ensured. The Institute for Quantitative Biology (IQB) at East Tennessee State University was formed to recognize, encourage, and reward the efforts of those who would risk their time and efforts in creating such collaborations, especially when such collaborations address particular needs, such as (1) the need to build communication between mathematicians and biologists, (2) the need to build up a critical mass of students and faculty in the area of quantitative biology, and (3) the need for organized efforts to build research and educational programs. We will discuss how a successful institute produces a willingness of biology and mathematics faculty to develop meaningful communication between the disciplines, often long before such collaborations are funded. We will also discuss how a successful institute can assume leadership in fostering such collaborations so that a balance between education and research can be maintained. In particular, having realistic but bold goals allows an Institute to foster stronger and longer connections between Math and Biology. (Received September 26, 2006)