

## Launch of the Centre for Systems Biology at Birmingham

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A new Centre for the study of Systems Biology will be officially launched on Tuesday 1st May when the University of Birmingham's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Michael Sterling, unveils a new piece of art by the science-based artist Dr Lizzie Burns.

Researchers in systems biology are looking to better understand the behaviour of complex biological systems such as single cells or tumour cells by constructing mathematical or computer models of the interactions between the component parts. The science has been made possible by the advent of advanced biological techniques for defining these parts and the development of powerful computers for simulating the behaviour of biological systems.

The aims of the Centre include modelling the 'circuitry' of pathogenic bacteria and cancer cells, for example, the modelling of gut cancer, to predict and test new drugs with computers rather than in the laboratory. It houses a supercomputer which researchers will use to analyse large amounts of data which are generated from biological experiments on gene expression and metabolism.

The artist, Dr Lizzie Burns, graduated from the University of Oxford and has a background in biochemistry and biology. She is now a science-based artist and has produced many commissioned works for Universities and companies. Her aim is to create paintings which show beauty and hope behind biomedical research. Lizzie says, 'The painting we are unveiling at the University of Birmingham is based on the theme of connections which lies at the heart of this research centre. It is inspired by images of phylogenetic trees, protein interaction networks and internet connectivity, but also appears to resemble growing plants, neurones or even outer space.'

Professor John Heath, Head of the University's School of Biosciences and Director of the Centre, says, 'The Centre for Systems Biology illustrates the University of Birmingham's commitment to promoting cutting edge research at the interface between the biological and mathematical sciences. Its activities will accelerate the pace of discovery in both Medical and Environmental arenas and help make the University a major centre of activity in this new form of science.'

The launch will take place at 3pm on Tuesday 1st May in the new Centre which is situated in the Haworth Building.

### Ends

### Notes to Editors

The Centre has been made possible by funding of £135,000 from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and the computers have been provided by Hewlett-Packard.

For further information

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