



Press Release

## Analyzing and Interpreting Cell Data

University of Freiburg to coordinate new Performance Center for Bioinformatics

New performance center for the Universities of Freiburg and Leipzig: Modern methods of investigating cell functions, for instance in genome research, involve the collection of an enormous amount of data, reaching into the terabyte range. The analysis and interpretation of this gigantic body of data present great challenges for the life sciences. The aim of the new RNA Bioinformatics Center (RBC), coordinated by Prof. Dr. **Rolf Backofen**, Chair of Bioinformatics at the Department of Computer Science of the University of Freiburg, is to close the gap between the accumulated data, analysis, and interpretation. The joint project of the Universities of Freiburg and Leipzig as well as the Max-Delbrück Center Berlin is one of six performance centers selected for funding by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and will receive 3.3 million euros in the next five years. It is part of the project "German Network for Bioinformatics Infrastructure," which was launched on 1 March 2015.

For many decades, the life sciences remained focused on DNA – genetic information and proteins. In recent years, however, it has become evident that ribonucleic acid (RNA) plays a more important role than previously assumed: In addition to its task of converting genetic information into proteins, it is involved in all important processes of the cell. A dysfunction of RNA can lead to severe illnesses, including many types of cancer as well as diseases of the nervous system like autism or Alzheimer's. This has motivated the development of numerous experimental methods for analyzing

University of Freiburg

Rectorate

Public Relations

Fahnenbergplatz  
D -79085 Freiburg

Contact:  
NAME

Tel. +49 (0)761 / 203 - 8812  
rimma.gerenstein@pr.uni-  
freiburg.de  
www.pr.uni-freiburg.de

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RNA-based data. These methods involve a lot of data, all of which needs to be managed and analyzed. “With the RBC, we want to establish a nationwide service center for scientists analyzing RNA data. Our aim is to create a platform combining various algorithms and work routines for the analysis of RNA data that is freely available as an open-source project,” explains Backofen.

**Contact:**

Prof. Dr. Rolf Backofen  
Chair of Bioinformatics  
Department of Computer Science  
Phone: +49 (0)761/203-7461  
E-Mail: backofen@informatik.uni-freiburg.de

Natascha Thoma-Widmann  
PR/Marketing Representative  
Faculty of Engineering  
University of Freiburg  
Phone: +49 (0)761/203-8056  
E-Mail: thoma-widmann@tf.uni-freiburg.de

The University of Freiburg achieves top positions in all university rankings. Its research, teaching, and continuing education have received prestigious awards in nationwide competitions. Over 24,000 students from 100 nations are enrolled in 188 degree programs. Around 5,000 teachers and administrative employees put in their effort every day – and experience that family friendliness, equal opportunity, and environmental protection are more than just empty phrases here.