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News Release

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Synthetic Biology Importance in the 21st Century

Five free iPods to those who test their knowledge at www.synbioproject.org

Washington, DC – Among the 75 people *Esquire* magazine recently chose as the most influential in the 21st century are three researchers in an emerging discipline that combines science and engineering in order to design and build novel biological functions and systems – otherwise known as synthetic biology.

The promise of this burgeoning scientific field lies in the potential to apply engineering principles to the fundamental components of biology. This includes the design and construction of new biological parts, devices, and systems (e.g., tumor-seeking microbes for cancer treatment), as well as the re-design of existing, natural biological systems for useful purposes (e.g., plants making energy). To test your knowledge of synthetic biology and potentially win a free iPod, visit www.synbioproject.org/quiz.

In response to this emerging field, the Synthetic Biology Project is being launched to identify gaps in our knowledge of the potential risks of the field, explore public perceptions towards it, and examine governance options that will both ensure public safety and facilitate innovation.

“Humans have been altering the genetic code of plants and animals for millennia, by selectively breeding individuals with desirable features. But more recent advances have enabled scientists to make new sequences of DNA from scratch. By combining these advances with the principles of modern engineering, scientists can now use computers and laboratory chemicals to design organisms that do new things -- like produce biofuels or excrete the precursors of medical drugs,” says David Rejeski, the director of the Project.

But just how much about this field is covered in the media? And while these scientists featured in *Esquire* – Drew Endy, Jay Keasling and Craig Venter – may hold the keys to improved medical treatments and cleaner fuels, are there adequate controls and security measures to limit potential risks? The development of www.synbioproject.org marks an effort to answer those questions.

of Synthetic Biology

Trends in American and European Press Coverage

About Synthetic Biology

Synthetic Biology Project

