April 18, 2014

Mail Stop Comments – Patents
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450
Attention: Nicole Dretar Haines

Via email: CrowdsourcingRoundtable2014@uspto.gov

Dear Ms. Haines,

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the use of crowdsourcing and third-party preissuance submissions to identify relevant prior art.

In seeking to improve patent quality, the USPTO might leverage the collective knowledge of the scientific and technical community in the life sciences by coordinating efforts with those already using crowdsourcing approaches to make biology easier to engineer. Specifically, the USPTO may find a wealth of prior art by working with innovators who are developing registries of biological parts for the engineering of biology.

Registries of biological parts, or genetically encoded functions, are being created by innovators in academic groups, government labs and commercial organizations. Created through crowdsourcing, these registries typically provide DNA sequence information together with functional information and performance specifications to speed and simplify the engineering of biology. The Registry of Standardized Biological Parts, for example, was the first registry developed in 2004 by innovators participating in the International Genetically Engineered Machines (iGEM) competition. Other registries have since begun to come online, including those created by the Joint BioEnergy Institute, the Synthetic Biology Engineering Research Center, and many others (*See* Kahl & Endy, http://www.jbioleng.org/content/7/1/13).

Today, registries of biological parts are becoming an increasingly valuable source of technology and prior art for the engineering of biology. By working with the innovators who are developing the software and tools for engineering biology, the USPTO could help ensure that registries of biological parts are available to, and easily searchable by, USPTO patent examiners.

I commend the USPTO for initiating the Crowdsourcing Roundtable and would be happy to talk with you further about how the USPTO might best engage the scientific and technical community to improve patent quality.

Respectfully submitted,

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