Project ideas

CS/BioE/CME/Biophys/BMI 279
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Project Ideas

- You are welcome (and encouraged) to pick something that is not on this list.
  - It should involve structure or spatial organization at a molecular or cellular level
- It can be methods-focused or application-focused
  - I.e., you can code/modify software, or apply existing software to a biological problem
- See project assignment sheet on website for details on project writeup and other information
  - Joint projects, overlaps with projects for other classes, etc.

Protein structure prediction

- Sample codes:
  - Rosetta/PyRosetta (or Robetta webserver)
  - Phyre2 (web server)
  - I-Tasser (web server or download code)
  - Modeller (web server called ModWeb, or download code)
  - SWISS-MODEL (web server)
- Topics of interest include
  - Structure prediction methodology
  - Structures of proteins of interest
  - Effects of protein modification (e.g., mutation, phosphorylation)
- Related: RNA/DNA structure prediction

Ligand Docking

- Established, free codes and web servers:
  - Autodock Vina
  - SwissDock
- Rosetta Dock (newer; can use in PyRosetta framework)
- Note:
  - GLIDE and GOLD are powerful but not free.
  - UCSF DOCK is free and powerful, but is reputedly difficult to install and learn.

- ZINC ligand database: http://zinc.docking.org/

- Related: Protein–protein docking (e.g., with ZDock, Haddock) or protein–ligand docking (e.g., with FlexPepDock or Backrub servers)

Molecular dynamics simulation

- Write your own code
- Don't reuse BMI/BIOE/GENE 214/CS 274 code, but can build on it
  - Increase speed (fast electrostatics methods, parallelization), improve integrators, add restraints/constraints
- Or use existing software
  - GROMACS, Desmond, NAMD, AMBER (PMEMD module): designed for performance. GROMACS, Desmond, and NAMD are free (for academic use); AMBER is not
  - Tinker—slow, but designed to be easy to work with the code
  - Most of these are designed for Linux, but Windows and Mac executables are available for Tinker
- Either focus on simulation of a particular protein, or on methods (e.g., molecular dynamics vs. Monte Carlo)

Protein Design

- Rosetta software is free for academic use
- Rosetta Design server: http://rosettadesign.med.unc.edu/

Image analysis

- Useful software:
  - Matlab (general-purpose)
  - ImageJ (free, widely used for biological image processing)
  - CellProfiler (free, includes machine learning applications)
- Or write your own software (e.g., for segmentation, edge detection, cell counting)
  - Some students have implemented an FFT. Ideally you would also apply your implementation to images.
- Sample image sets:
  - https://data.broadinstitute.org/bbbc/
  - http://www.cellprofiler.org/
  - Please let me know of other good ones you find!

Reaction-diffusion simulation

- Use existing codes:
  - MCell, Smoldyn, Simmune
  - For MCell, consider using CellOrganizer or CellBlender to make models or renderings
- Write your own code
- Build a model of a cellular process, or consider methodological issues

Single-particle electron microscopy

- Software packages:
  - XMIPP: has a graphical user interface, somewhat easier to use
  - Relion: more mathematically sophisticated (Bayesian methods)
- Most use MPI, which complicates installation.
- Alternative: implement something yourself
  - Work in two dimensions for simplicity
  - Or tackle early stages in single-particle EM pipeline, such as particle picking

Crystallography

- Structure factors (i.e., primary crystallographic data) are often available in PDB.
  - See http://www.rcsb.org/pdb/101/static101.do?p=education_discussion/Looking-at-Structures/structurefactors.html
- CNS software (http://cns-online.org/v1.3/)

Other topics

- CellPack (http://www.autopack.org/): packing proteins into a cell
- EVFold (http://evfold.org/): protein structure prediction based on covariation across sequences
- Secondary structure prediction from sequence (e.g., using a neural network)