Biophysical Complexity

23–25 April 2003, Southampton, UK

This conference will bring together researchers in the life sciences and in the physical sciences to discuss aspects of Biophysics and Biophysical Chemistry that can contribute to a systems, or integrative, approach to biological organization and processes. Topics that are relevant to the meeting include physical architecture and spatio-temporal organization of nuclei, intracellular signaling pathways and cell-cell communication, control and structure of biochemical networks, multi-enzyme complexes, and physical methods for studying molecular and cellular processes.

A number of distinguished and innovative scientists from both the life sciences and the physical sciences will present overviews, suitable for non-specialists, of areas of research that impact integrative biology. In addition, contributed short talks coupled to posters will provide an opportunity for the presentation of more specialized or detailed material. The invited lectures, together with the contributed talks and posters, are intended to stimulate and inform discussion during the extended poster sessions.

The theme of the conference is particularly timely as systems biology initiatives are developing in a number of countries. In the USA, systems biology is a rapidly expanding area of cross-disciplinary research, while in Europe, Germany has announced a systems biology initiative. In the UK, the Biotechnology & Biological Sciences Research Council has identified systems biology as one of its four priority areas for the coming decade.

The relative lack of opportunities for communication between the physical sciences and the life sciences communities poses a significant barrier to the growth of this cross-disciplinary area of science. Physical chemistry is at a particular disadvantage in the current move towards systems biology. This is because much of the immediate emphasis is either on technologies for genomics and proteomics, or on the application of control engineering to biochemical and genetic networks. However, chemists, and in particular physical chemists, will be central to the continued growth of the life sciences in the post-genomic era because of their uniquely broad discipline base, detailed understanding of molecular/macromolecular properties, and their training in quantitative model building. It is one of the objectives of this meeting to encourage delegates to identify areas of collaboration across scientific and national boundaries.

See Calendar on page 34 for contact information.

www.complexity.soton.ac.uk

Inaugural Conference for the Southern and Eastern Africa Network of Analytical Chemists

7–10 July 2003, Gaborone, Botswana

Since 1999, the analytical chemistry section of the University of Botswana has annually organized two-day international analytical chemistry workshops in the month of February. In the last workshop, held on 25-27 February 2002 and funded by the Swedish Industrial Development Agency, delegates representing 13 universities from 11 African countries agreed that a pool of African expertise familiar with issues relating to the African continent be established. This led to the formation of the Southern and Eastern Africa Network of Analytical Chemists (SEANAC). The main aims and objectives of SEANAC are as follows:

(a) to create a database for providing information on human and physical resources in the field of analytical chemistry, particularly those available in the Africa region

(b) to promote analytical chemistry in the southern and eastern Africa region through collaboration, research, research training, teaching and information sharing