

iGEM - unforgettable undergraduate research experience

International Genetically Engineered Machine (iGEM) Competition is an eye-opening experience that gave us the opportunity to tackle global problems with the advancements of synthetic biology. By providing a friendly international environment and a high level of flexibility, iGEM encouraged us to find creative solutions to global problems and spread our knowledge to the world.

This year our team embarked on a fascinating journey to develop a novel genetically engineered system aimed to improve existing treatments of the liver cancer. Standing as the third most common cancer death in Hong Kong, the disease is a crucial target for enhancing public healthcare. The challenges we faced both inside and outside of the lab inspired us to build bridges between rigid scientific research and the ever-transforming society. As a result, we learnt how to perform lab research and communicate our ideas to the general public - skills that are vital for any undergraduate student pursuing a career in science.

The culminating point of our journey with iGEM was the trip to Boston, where we visited the world's most renowned universities and showcased our work to the judges and research teams from different parts of the globe. Walking past mighty oak and maple trees covered with beautiful fall foliage, we explored the campuses of Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) famous for high-end technologies and compelling research institutes (**Photo 1,2**).

At the same time, we immersed ourselves in the inspiring and competitive atmosphere shared with more than three hundred unique iGEM teams, each raising important questions and striving to make the world a better place to live. Showcasing our work on the Giant Jamboree Exhibition at the Hynes Convention Centre, we have introduced the world to our innovative solutions to the world problems. In the end, we were genuinely happy to gain a silver medal for our hard work. The whole experience boosted our confidence in aspiring research-oriented career paths and reignited our passion for science. iGEM is an excellent platform for undergraduate students to gain life-long skills and make a contribution to the world.



Photo 1: Our team walking in the campus of Harvard University



Photo 2: Our team on the grass outside of the famous Harvard church



Photo 3: Our poster in the Hynes Convention Center