

Lausanne, 23 February 2015

To whom it may concern

Reference

We certify that

Dr Aurélien Grosdidier, born 27 November 1977, was appointed to the Molecular Modeling Group (MM) of the Swiss Institute of Bioinformatics (SIB) on 1 January 2007, while he was still a doctoral student. In July of that year, having obtained his PhD, he was promoted to the position of bioinformatician.

During his time with Molecular Modeling, Dr Grosdidier was responsible for the design, development and maintenance of the EADock application and the website SwissDock.ch, the first online docking solution for drug design, based on a universal physical description of proteins and ligands. EADock has seen three consecutive releases, each resulting in the publication of a paper in a peer-reviewed scientific journal. SwissDock.ch provides the international scientific community with free, public access to the latest version of EADock, which remains one of the few online solutions in the field.

Over the course of our 12 years of collaboration, 7 of them as a salaried employee of the Swiss Institute of Bioinformatics, Dr Grosdidier co-authored 20 scientific papers, 4 of them as first author. He lectured extensively and provided support for engineers, as well as working on the Group's public relations. In particular, he taught docking to students at the master's degree level and conducted demonstrations of SwissDock at scientific conferences as well as events for the general public (science popularization).

In 2002, while still a university researcher, Dr Grosdidier assumed overall responsibility for the information system (IS) of the Molecular Modeling Group in addition to that of Lausanne University's molecular modeling platform, for which he was the technical director from its inception. Working closely with the leader of Molecular Modeling, he was in charge of design implementation for the information systems, as well as help desk services, infrastructure administration (involving GNU/Linux and MacOS workstations, a standard network and common network services, several high performance computing clusters, virtualization) and security (authentication, confidentiality, backup, availability and monitoring).

In 2008, Dr Grosdidier began identifying and acquiring the expertise and skills that would be needed for a successful technology transfer, based on his research, to devise software solutions that would benefit the scientific community as a whole. Among the projects that he implemented during this period was SwissDock.

From 2011 onwards, faced with increasing demand from Institute project teams for technology transfer, Dr Grosdidier put his recently acquired know-how and experience at the service of the interdisciplinary team for the Institute's web projects. Notably, he made a decisive contribution to the back-end and web service for key Institute projects, including ExPASy.org, SwissParam, SwissBioisostere and later SwissSideChain. In particular, he was responsible for coordinating, integrating, deploying, maintaining and updating the IS/IT side of these Institute-funded projects. He actively participated in the Institute's web team and made significant contributions to the development of the latest version of the ExPASy website.

Knowing of the impending challenges facing the projects that used the information services of the Group, Dr Grosdidier took the initiative in 2013 to perform an audit of the Group's internal IT processes in order to optimize, simplify and shorten the necessary steps for technology transfer as much as possible. He then directly coordinated the IT development of these projects with a view to producing reliable, functional, safe and scalable applications. Having accomplished this, he provided the requisite integration, roll-out, maintenance, updating and monitoring services using resources he had previously dimensioned and set up.

In 2014, this optimization bore fruit in the form of significant, rapid advances in the development versions of SwissParam, SwissADME and SwissTargetPrediction, among others. In parallel, he built on the outcome of systematic audits to implement a unified IS security approach, improving the hardening of the infrastructure, the services deployed and the development methods.

Thanks to his initiative in acquiring new expertise in computer science, especially in the field of open source, Dr Grosdidier was able to transform research-based software technology into powerful, functional, stable and reliable solutions serving the international scientific community.

Dr Grosdidier has a passion for information and computer science and for the development of research tools, and he has acquired extensive, in-depth skills in these fields, for the benefit of the Molecular Modeling Group and occasionally the entire Institute. On the information systems side, Dr Grosdidier has performed situation analysis and strategic as well as operational decision making, from software architecture and development to agile project management, in coordination with the members of the Group. In parallel, he continued to broaden his knowledge of bioinformatics and molecular modeling.

Highly dedicated, thorough and organized, Dr Grosdidier always carried out his work with the utmost attention and care, to our entire satisfaction. He was able to plan, identify and carry out independently the tasks assigned for each of the projects, demonstrating an exemplary dedication to achievement. Of an inquisitive nature and ever alert to scientific developments, Dr Grosdidier provided a flawless technology watch service for our projects. He took it upon himself to share his knowledge with his colleagues, with whom he had an excellent working relationship, and was always willing to help.

The economic difficulties that our Group encountered obliged us to end our working relationship with Dr Grosdidier. He left us on 31 January 2015, free of any obligation towards our institute apart from the duty of professional confidentiality.

We recommend him without reservation to any future employer and wish him the best of success for the continuation of his professional career.

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