General Policies for Service and Facility Access

The University at Albany’s RNA Epitranscriptomics and Proteomics Resource (REPR) provides analytical support according to two distinct mechanisms:

a) Service-for-fee
b) Partnership

The former involves limited assistance from REPR personnel according to a tiered system with corresponding fees. The fees are different for UAlbany and extramural investigators. All fees are reviewed regularly by the REPR Advisory Board and posted in a separate Cost Structure document. The latter involves full-fledged participation funded by subcontracts or direct allocations from funded grants.

The Service Selection App (SSA) available on the REPR’s website provides a decision tool for guiding the identification of the best possible type of analysis and service for the task at hand. Prospective users are urged to run the SSA before contacting REPR personnel about possible work, terms, and conditions. The most current fee structure is also posted on the website to enable users to make informed decisions. Users are required to fill a Sample Submission Form (SSF) (a template is provided on the website) to be included with any sample submitted for analysis, regardless of whether the analysis will be carried out by REPR personnel or actual users. All users are expected to provide complete financial information before any service can be rendered.

a) Service-for-fee

The services available for a fee are the following:

a.1) Sample analysis. Specialized REPR personnel are responsible for performing the analysis of samples submitted by users according to agreed-upon modes and procedures. In this case, users will be expected to carry out all necessary sample preparation and to submit samples that are ready to be injected into the instrument. Sample origin, history, solubility, expected impurities, and other pertinent information must be provided in the accompanying SSF. Users will be expected to follow the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for sample preparation, which are posted on the REPR’s website. After completing the analysis, REPR personnel will return MS data with detailed experimental conditions.

Different types of analyses require different levels of personnel effort and instrument usage. The Cost Structure reflects the time spent by REPR personnel to carry out the analysis, as well as the prorated time spent for instrument calibration, setup, maintenance, and troubleshooting. The Cost Structure includes also the costs of consumables, solvents, calibrants, and other items necessary to maintain the instrument fully operational. Beyond initial consultations to verify the proper match between the type of sample and proposed analysis, REPR personnel will not be able to assist the user with experiment design, sample
preparation, troubleshooting, and data interpretation. If users require extensive help with these operations, REPR personnel will be able to help for a nominal consulting fee (see Cost Structure).

Note 1): A consulting fee will be charged any time the user will require extensive help from REPR personnel, which goes beyond a) a regular training session; b) an initial consultation on experimental design and conditions; c) quick initial tips on how to perform data interpretation. See the Cost Structure document for current rates.

Note 2): Consulting fees will be applied any time users ask for a) extensive method development; b) extensive experiment troubleshooting; c) extensive discussions of experimental design and planning; d) extensive assistance with data interpretation; e) help preparing formal reports, manuscripts, and grant proposals; f) any other activity involving extensive input from REPR personnel. In such cases, users should seriously consider entering in a partnership with REPR (vide infra).

a.2) Self-service analysis. Whenever the desired type of sample/analysis makes it possible, REPR will provide users with the opportunity to perform analyses in self-service fashion (see SSA). In this case, users will be required to complete proper training (vide infra), which will be offered by REPR for a nominal fee. Upon certification by REPR personnel, users will receive individual accounts on a web-based scheduling server, which will enable them to reserve instrument time, use the instrumentation, and be billed for the usage. Users will be expected to carry out all necessary sample-preparation steps and fill an SSF per each sample analyzed, which will remain in the REPR’s records. Users will perform analysis according to the most appropriate SOP (available on the website) and will be fully responsible for the outcome, as well as operator safety, instrument integrity, and cleanliness. Failure to ensure operator safety, instrument integrity, and cleanliness will result in losing the privilege of self-service analysis.

Although users will be performing the analysis by themselves, REPR personnel will still be involved in instrument setup, calibration, troubleshooting, and maintenance. The Cost Structure reflects the different levels of involvement/effort by REPR personnel and the corresponding prorated costs for instrument usage. Beyond initial consultations to verify the proper match between the type of sample and proposed analysis, REPR personnel will not be able to assist the user with experiment design, sample preparation, troubleshooting, and data interpretation. However, if users require extensive help with these operations, REPR personnel will be able to help for a nominal consulting fee (see Cost Structure).

a.3) Sample preparation services. On an exceptional basis, REPR personnel might be able to carry out limited sample preparation. Users looking for help in these operations are urged to send a detailed inquiry by using the Contact Us function of the website. As described above, users are first and foremost encouraged to prepare their own samples by following detailed SOPs posted on the website. Users should first run the SSA to decide whether the suggested sample preparation may be feasible in their own laboratory. If not, they should inquire with REPR to check for time availability and feasibility. Contingent to primary obligations, REPR will make an effort to accommodate the requests for a fee indicated in the Cost Structure.

a.4) Training. REPR personnel will provide hands-on training on the selected instruments
that are open for self-service analysis. For a nominal fee indicated in the posted Cost Structure, prospective users will receive sufficient instruction to ensure safe instrument usage and ability to perform basic operations. Additional training can be purchased later to enable more advanced operations. Upon training completion, users will be certified and receive permission to perform self-service analysis. The training session will cover instrument-specific rules for proper usage, which are designed to preserve the performance, cleanliness, and life expectancy of the instrument. Repeated infractions of these rules will result in losing the privilege of self-service analysis.

Note 3: REPR is committed to providing regular workshops on experimental strategies, sample preparation procedures, and data interpretation, which will be held in connection with UAlbany’s periodic research symposia.

a.5) Ad hoc consultations. For a modest hourly fee (see Cost Structure document), REPR personnel will provide ad hoc consultations to help users carry out their projects (see Note 1 and 2, above). This mechanism will be triggered whenever the involvement of REPR personnel will exceed the time allocated to provide training for new users, basic instructions/tips on how to run an analysis, and an initial discussion on the proper match between the type of sample and proposed analysis. This category covers situations in which REPR personnel will be asked to invest protracted periods of time to inform the selection of experimental strategies, advise on proper sample preparation, perform comprehensive data interpretation, engage in successive rounds of troubleshooting, and other sustained/regular consultations. REPR will make an effort to accommodate any request for this type of help, contingent on time availability and fulfillment of primary obligations.

b) Partnership

Engaging REPR in a full-fledged collaboration is the best way to capitalize on the extensive experience of its personnel and their knowledge of the MS platform. In the last decade, the outcome of MS-based projects has come to depend more on the ability to ask the correct question and select the most appropriate experimental strategy, than on the actual capabilities and performance of available instrumentation. Only a full-fledged collaboration can ensure the participation of REPR personnel in all phases of a project, including planning, experimental design, sample preparation/analysis, experiment troubleshooting, data interpretation, and generation of publication-quality reports. Collaborative projects can be funded by subcontracts or direct allocations from research grants according to different options.

b.1) Option 1. For currently funded projects, REPR will serve as a subcontractor and assign selected personnel to the project. The subcontract will account for actual personnel effort, instrument time, prorated maintenance/upkeep, materials and consumables, which will be necessary to carry out the pertinent part of the project. Representative rates are provided in the posted Cost Structure. Actual rates will be based on negotiated levels of involvement/effort/usage, which will be reviewed regularly by the REPR Advisory Board.

b.2) Option 2. For projects that are not currently funded, REPR will work with the prospective Principal Investigator (PI) to generate the necessary preliminary data and write pertinent sections of the proposal. Any activities carried out before the award will be considered as service and, thus, will fall under the categories a.1, a.3, and a.5 described
above. The costs will be charged to the prospective PI according to the posted Cost Structure. The budget of the proposal based on the preliminary data will include proper allocations to cover the work done by REPR after the grant is awarded. As described in point b.1, the allocation could involve establishing a subcontract, or including selected REPR personnel as key personnel, whichever may strengthen the proposal itself. Representative rates are provided in the posted Cost Structure. Actual rates will be based on negotiated levels of involvement/effort/usage, which will be reviewed regularly by the REPR Advisory Board.

**Note:** The acquisition of preliminary data and development of a proposal can be typically covered by current grants, startup funds, or different seed monies provided by our University and other public or private initiatives. REPR will be happy to provide support letters to secure seed funding.

Interested parties should contact REPR to learn more about the different mechanisms and discuss the best possible fit for the prospective activities and financial situations.

The REPR Advisory Board will regularly review the level of involvement/effort/usage for both personnel and instrumentation to ensure the fairness of fees, terms, and conditions listed in the Cost Structure. The REPR Advisory Board will also review the policies implemented by the Resource, help decide on the priorities of the various service and partnership components, and intervene as needed in possible conflict-resolution situations.