

The rise of do-it-yourself biology: A look at the Baltimore underground science space

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The Wilson Center's Synthetic Biology Project has released a short documentary on the growth of the do-it-yourself biology (DIYbio) movement as seen through a community DIYbio lab in Baltimore, Maryland.

The Rise of Do-It-Yourself Biology: A Look at the Baltimore Underground Science Space (BUGSS) explores the work of BUGSS, a fast-growing community lab on the east side of Baltimore, Maryland. BUGSS grew out of a group of interested students and professors at a local community college and now offers courses, lectures and the ability to experiment with biotechnology, from building microorganisms to modifying 3D printers.

In addition to providing an inside look at the BUGSS lab, the film explores the issues surrounding DIYbio community labs in general, including how they secure funding, where they find their equipment, and how they address concerns about biosafety.

"BUGSS is on the cutting edge of the DIYbio movement," says Dr. Todd Kuiken, senior program associate at the Synthetic Biology Project. "Spaces like BUGSS are providing creative and innovative outlets for scientists of all ages, while also providing educational opportunities where traditional academic institutions have lagged behind."

In 2013, the Synthetic Biology Project released *Seven Myths and Realities about Do-It-Yourself Biology*, a survey of DIYbio practitioners

that challenges seven widely held beliefs about DIYbio, particularly that anonymous scientists are cooking up deadly epidemics in their basements. The report is available on the project's website: <http://www.synbioproject.org/publications/6676/>

The Rise of DIYbio was filmed on location at BUGSS in Baltimore and at the Wilson Center in Washington, DC. The film was directed and produced by Aaron Lovell, with the help of Joe Filvarof and Lee Gillenwater. David Rejeski, the director of the Science and Technology Innovation Program, is the film's executive producer. The Synthetic Biology Project is part of the Science and Technology Innovation Program at the Wilson Center.

The BUGSS website can be found here: <http://www.bugssonline.org/>

More information: The film can be found online here: <http://www.synbioproject.org/news/project/bugss-doc/>

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