

From: [REDACTED]
To: "jeffrey E." <jeevacation@gmail.com>
Subject: Re: Trip Report: Bioscience & Philanthropy Summit (Allen Institute)
Date: Mon, 25 Sep 2017 19:13:49 +0000

Super cool

On Sep 25, 2017, at 3:05 PM, jeffrey E. <jeevacation@gmail.com> wrote:

i am starting to research an internet based DAF. so that funders and scientists can hook up

On Mon, Sep 25, 2017 at 3:03 PM, [REDACTED] wrote:

Begin forwarded message:

From: Steven Sinofsky [REDACTED]
Date: September 25, 2017 at 1:13:58 PM EDT
To: Bill Gates [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED] Larry Cohen [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Trip Report: Bioscience & Philanthropy Summit (Allen Institute)

That's unfortunate and I didn't know that. I hope you can find a way collaborate as I think you share goals and certainly the problem space is big enough even if one just focuses on neuroscience (bio, computational)!

I don't think there were many individual donors or first generation on the philanthropy side (they would have been recognizable!)—I don't have the attendee list handy (which was provided). Sandy Weill did a panel with Elizabeth Blackburn on the topic of funding.

On Sep 25, 2017, at 10:00 AM, Bill Gates [REDACTED] wrote:

I don't know anything about the attendees since they prevented anyone from our Foundation from attending.

I have done a lot of work on philanthropic funding of science through the giving pledge since I am such a believer in it.

We have had a number of special gatherings of members just focused on that topic.

From: Steven Sinofsky [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, September 25, 2017 9:55 AM
To: Bill Gates [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]; Larry Cohen [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Trip Report: Bioscience & Philanthropy Summit (Allen Institute)

I think this is a new event and as with all new events it takes a couple of iterations to arrive at complete clarity. They have been diligent in requesting feedback and Paul (and the institute leaders) were gathering feedback constantly.

The stated goals:

- Bring together diverse scientists who would not normally attend the same events or present to each other
- Augment the audience with those with a vested interest in either directly funding science or providing infrastructure for scientific funding
- Describe “moonshot” projects that are broad expansions of existing work or bring together multiple disciplines to seed ideas for the above two groups

The challenge with focused conferences is the same as we see in computer science (all the SIGs, etc.) is that what is presented is already known, as you know very well. Focused conferences, especially, in bioscience are rarely to unveil new research ideas but to amplify existing work or more importantly to give new scientists an opportunity to enter the academy.

On the other hand, many important breakthroughs can be traced back to convenings of scientists who normally don't collaborate and to present ideas not yet fully vetted by the publishing process. While the internet itself can do some of this (pre-publication dissemination) I think the in-person dialog is critically important.

An example of this from this conference that I noted was one of the speakers spoke about a moonshot in the space of evolutionary biology. What he was doing inadvertently in his talk was backing into a very interesting machine learning problem as noted by one of the more mathematically inclined investors that happened to be there. The questions in front of everyone connected some potentially interest dots. Sure that is one example and it could be this was just an old-school biologist, but that is the kind of conversation and forum like this facilitates.

I think your test of “what would be different if the conference didn't happen” could apply to nearly 100% of convenings that take place without a stated “output” a priori (proposal, working paper, etc.). But almost no conferences have an output as a goal. In this spirit, the event felt much more like TED or PC Forum to me, than it felt like any annual meeting of a focused society (AAAS) or sub discipline of science (SIGGRAPH) [all things I have been to].

What people often say makes/breaks a conference are not the sessions specifically but the connections and potential that comes about because of those connections. Most conferences people don't like are ones where the format did not lend itself to meeting other people or being flexible in their use of time while they were there. Especially in life science, serendipity is pretty important. Right now in life science, the roles of both machine learning and semiconductors/mobile are so far afield from life sciences and so immature as tooling that any forum that brings together people either working on those or interested in bringing them together is interesting. This is especially true because so few labs really understand the technology side unless it is already packaged up as tools (a great example is the incredible work being done on TBI and the "tricorder").

The funding side is pretty interesting still. I think only about half the presenters were funding by Paul in any significant way though one piece of feedback I offered was that it wasn't always clear (you could tell by how much they thanked Paul to some degree). You know much better than anyone the dynamics of philanthropic funding of science so I don't feel qualified to comment.

What I found interesting was that speakers were not all giant labs with insatiable funding needs. Some of the moonshots were extraordinarily modest (20M). And yes some were absurd and clearly proposed by researchers that already have too much money (\$5B over 10 years). Some didn't even need money but wanted to see a reaction to a broader multi-disciplinary approach. Likewise, I don't think the philanthropists there were all looking to own an area of science or even have billions to fund it. There's some interesting match making that could happen.

Speaking with a few of the philanthropists there I think they are learning too. Perhaps that is some goal. Everyone is aware that the landscape for funding science is always changing. The more directed funding sources become the less room there is for exploration and the less room for exploration the less multi-disciplinary work happens.

Anyway, I think it is easy to see the challenges this forum faces. On the other hand, I think with open eyes it is just as easy to see the potential.

On Sep 24, 2017, at 9:01 PM, Bill Gates [REDACTED] wrote:

I agree these are exciting topics and that there is real progress.

I am confused about what the goal of this event was.

Was it to have scientists learn from each other? The range of topics was so diverse and therefore shallow enough that I doubt it would fill that role compared to the focused conferences.

Was the goal to convince philanthropists to give more? The material was too complex for that and they didn't have the right people there.

It is complicated to have philanthropists feel like they should give in an area where Paul is already funding a lot of things and most don't do science but rather specific diseases or universities.

I agree the work is exciting and that you could understand it since you are broad and know these areas but I am still not sure what would be different if they didn't do the conference.

I don't why the photos didn't come through.

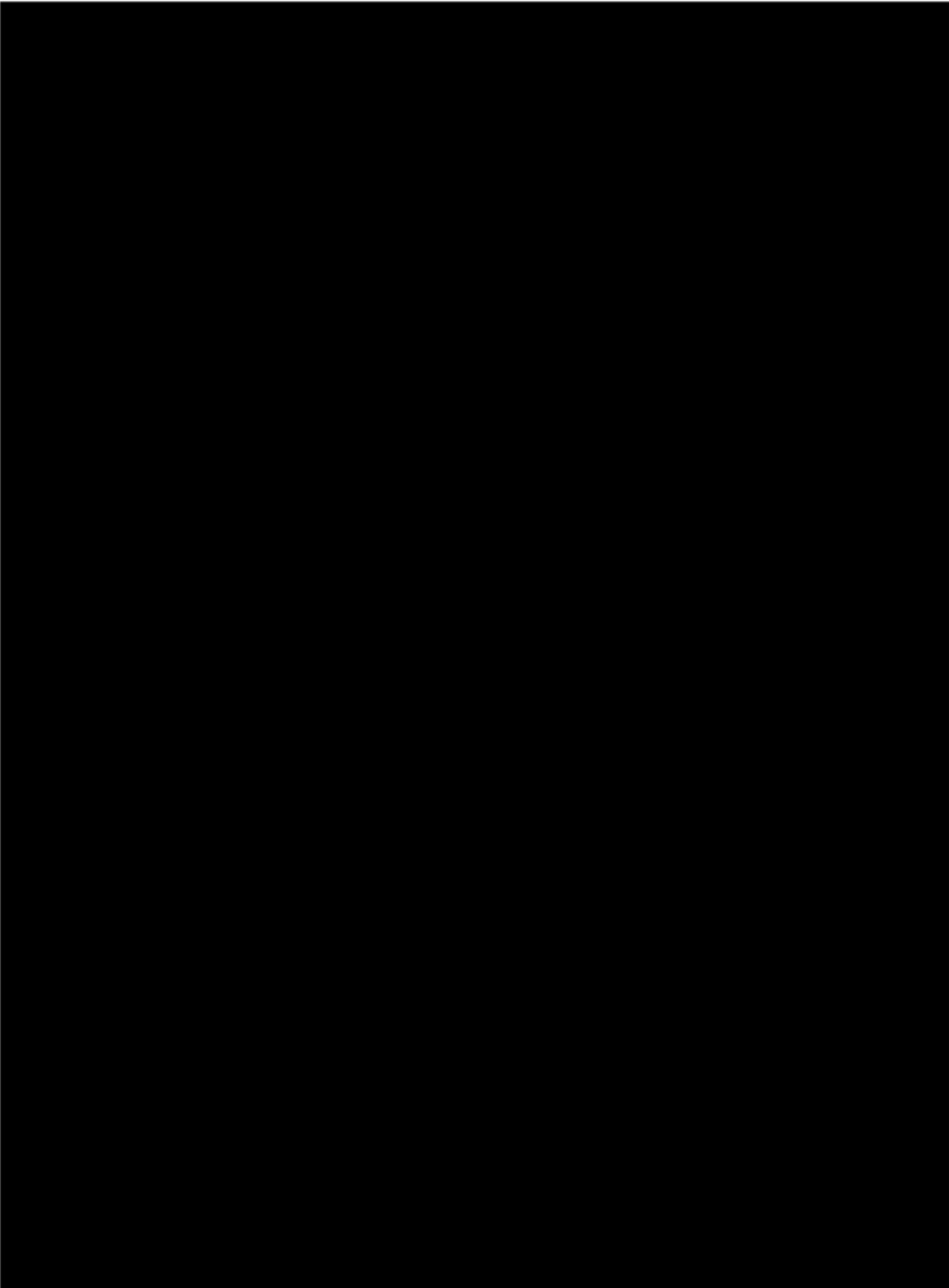
From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, September 23, 2017 11:09 AM
To: Bill Gates <[REDACTED]>
Cc: Larry Cohen <[REDACTED]>; Steven Sinofsky <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Trip Report: Bioscience & Philanthropy Summit (Allen Institute)

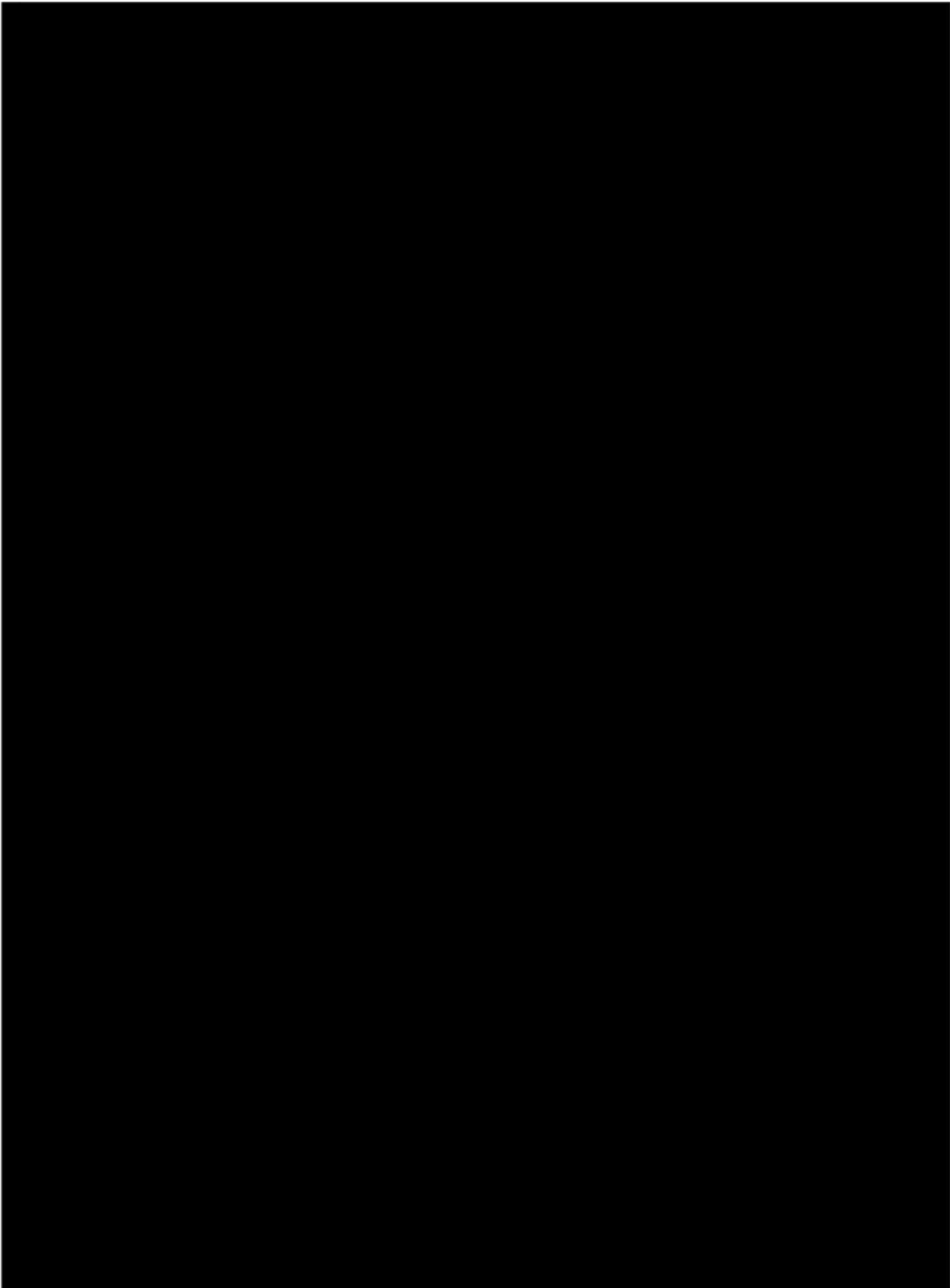
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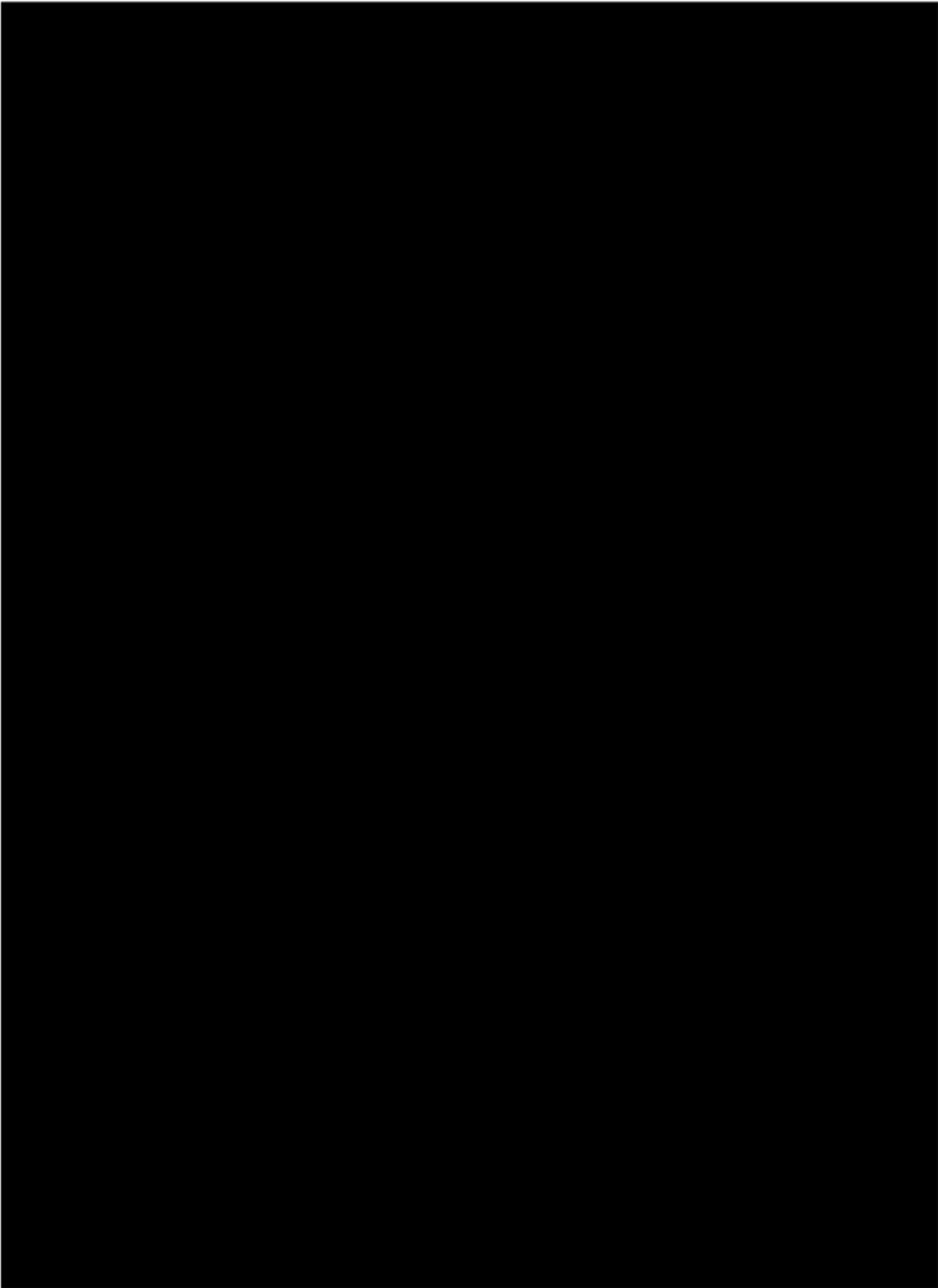


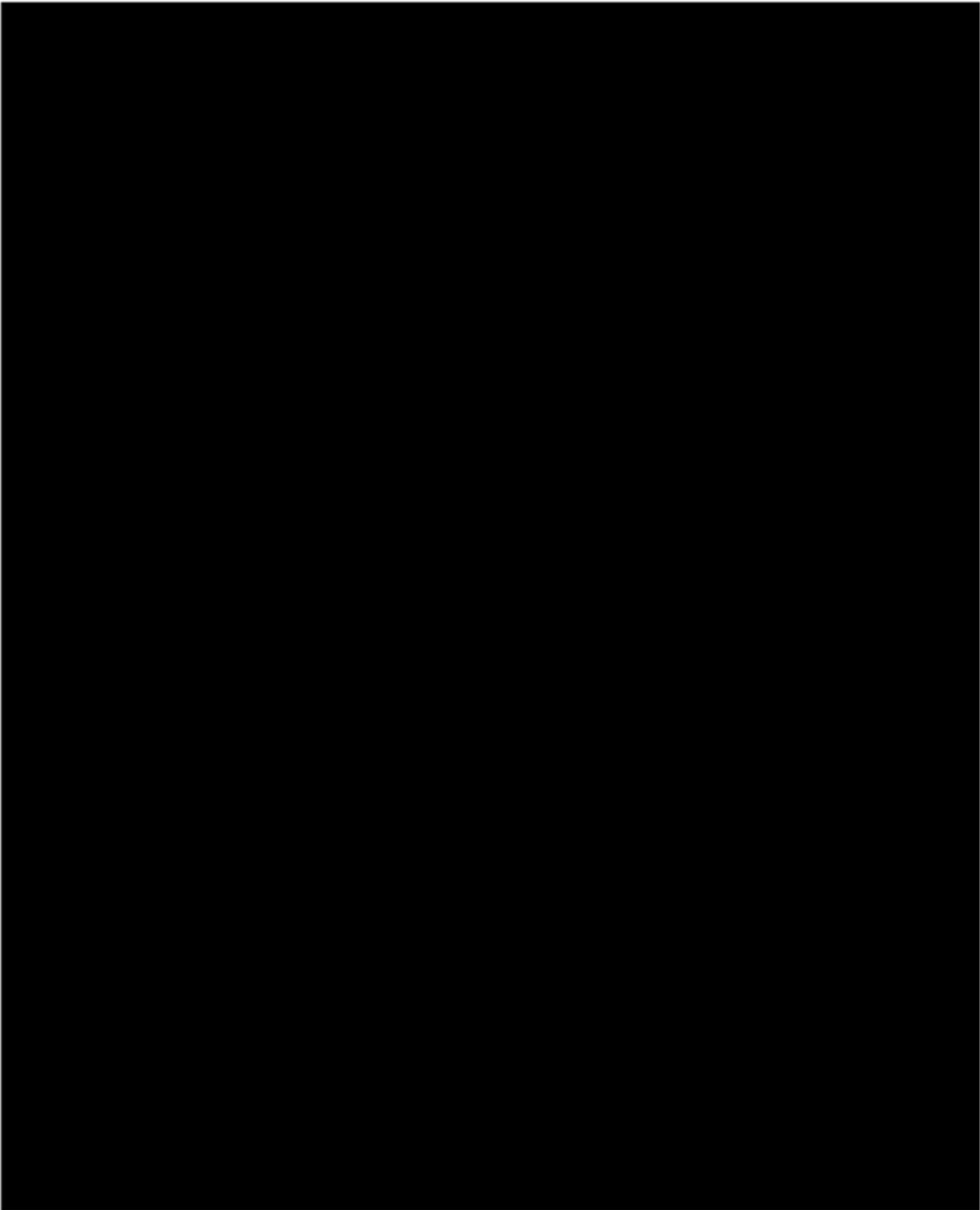
Steven and I co-authored this report - thought you both might enjoy hearing more about what Paul was up to in the biosciences. Let us know if docx easier.











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