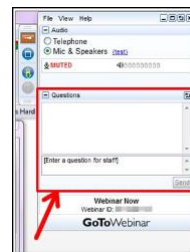
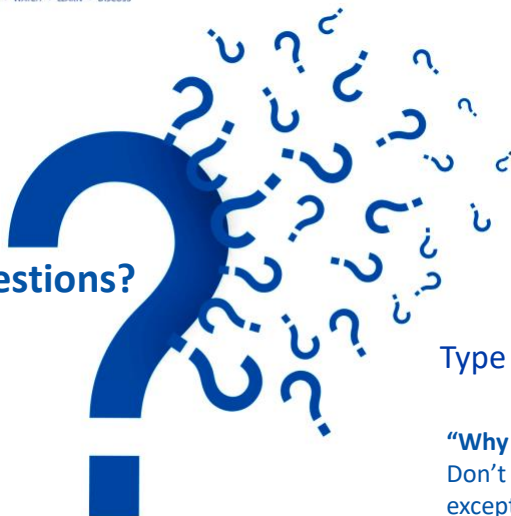




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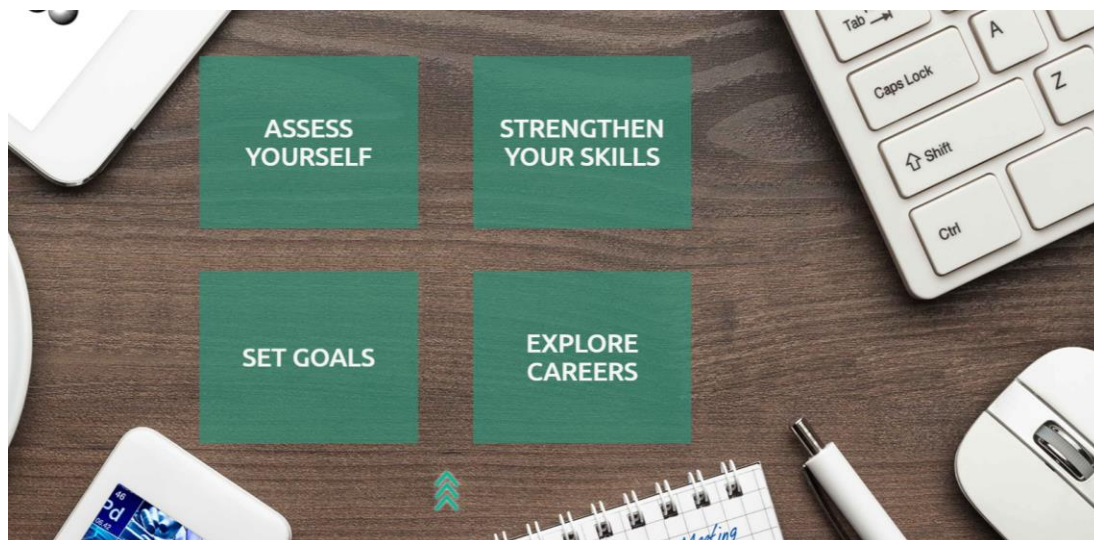


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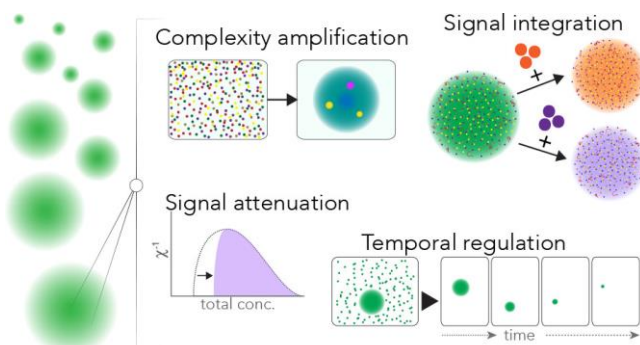
### Functional Implications of Intracellular Phase Transitions

Alex S. Holehouse\* and Rohit V. Pappu\*

© Cite this: *Biochemistry* 2018, 57, 17, 2415-2423  
 Publication Date: January 11, 2018  
<https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.biochem.7b01136>  
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### Abstract

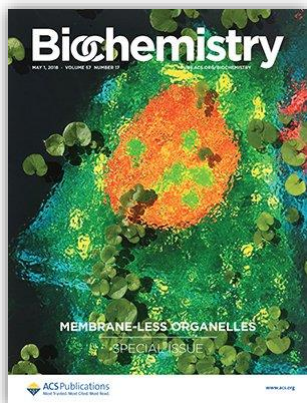
Intracellular environments are heterogeneous milieus comprised of macromolecules, osmolytes, and a range of assemblies that include membrane-bound organelles and membraneless biomolecular condensates. The latter are nonstoichiometric assemblies of protein and RNA molecules. They represent distinct phases and form via intracellular phase transitions. Here, we present insights from recent studies and provide a perspective on how phase transitions that lead to biomolecular condensates might contribute to cellular functions.

<https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.biochem.7b01136>

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In this **Special Issue**, *Biochemistry* explores the exciting interdisciplinary field of **Membraneless Organelles**.

All biological systems use location as a determinant of function at different scales, ranging from whole organisms to atoms within biomolecules. How to get key actors to the right locations at the right time and how to keep them there until they are no longer needed are key logistical challenges cells must perfect in order to thrive. Cells use different strategies to regulate localization; the best known is compartmentalization into traditional membrane-bound organelles such as the nucleus, endoplasmic reticulum, or Golgi complex. In the past few years, it has been proposed that membraneless organelles exist and complement larger classical organelles.

<https://pubs.acs.org/toc/bichaw/57/17>

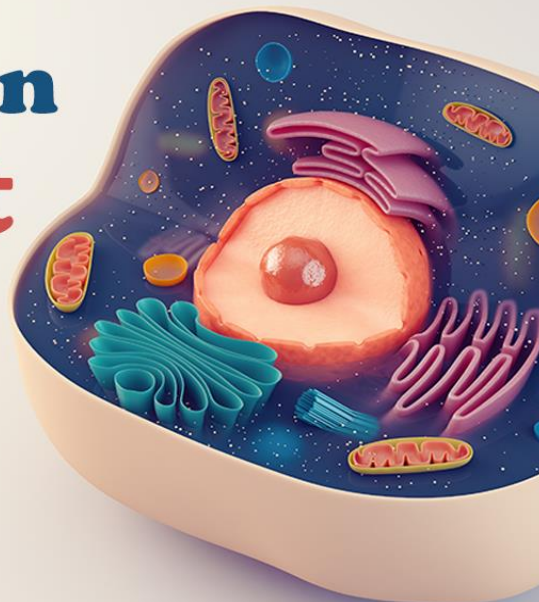
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**Biochemistry**

# Phase Separation of Multivalent Proteins

## Recent Findings and New Frontiers



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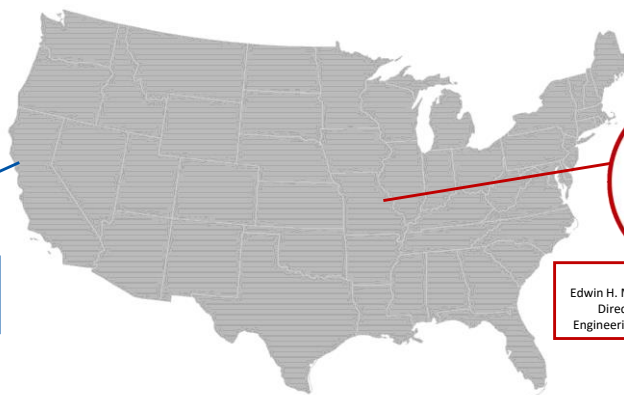
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## Phase Separation of Multivalent Proteins: Recent Findings and New Frontiers



**Sarah Smaga**  
Coordinating Editor, *Biochemistry* and  
Project Coordinator, Center for  
Genetically Encoded Materials



**Rohit Pappu**  
Edwin H. Murty Professor of Engineering and the  
Director, Center for Biological Systems  
Engineering, Washington University in St. Louis.


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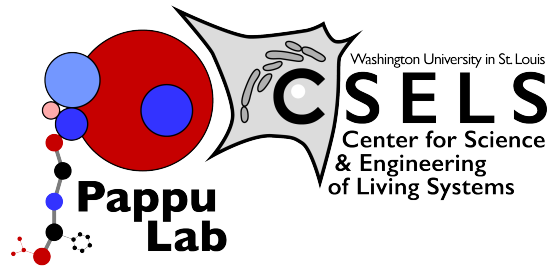
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# *Phase Separation of Multivalent Proteins*

**Rohit Pappu**

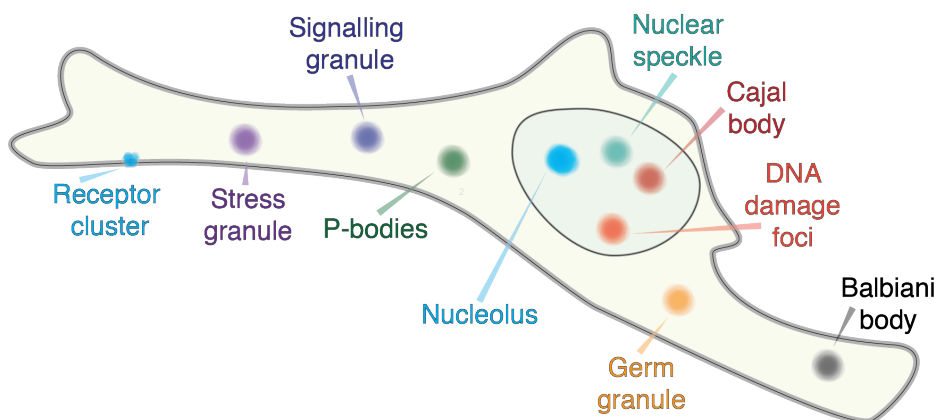
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## **Membraneless organelles enable spatial and temporal organization of cellular matter**



Banani, ..., Hyman, Rosen, 2017, Nature Rev. Mol. Cell Biol.  
Shin, Brangwynne, 2017, Science

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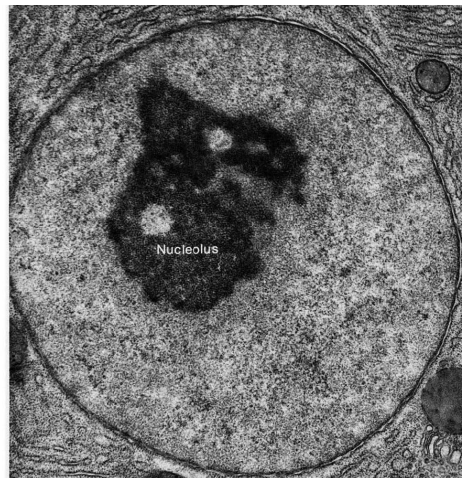


Membraneless organelles are also known as ***biomolecular condensates*** because they concentrate biomolecules via processes that resemble the condensation of liquids

Banani,...,Hyman, Rosen, 2017, Nature Rev. Mol. Cell Biol.  
Shin, Brangwynne, 2017, Science

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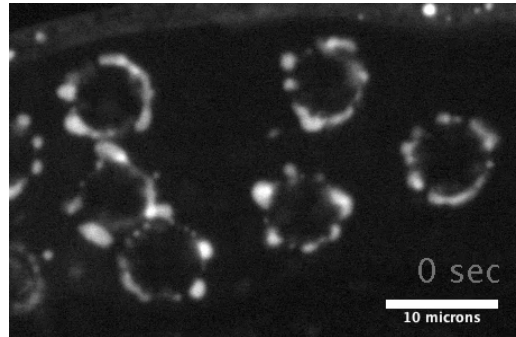
***Nucleoli*** - where ribosomal subunits are assembled - are examples of biomolecular condensates

Feric et al., Cell (2016)

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## Membraneless organelles have the characteristics of dense liquids



### Example of P-granules

Brangwynne *et al.* *Science* (2009)

5

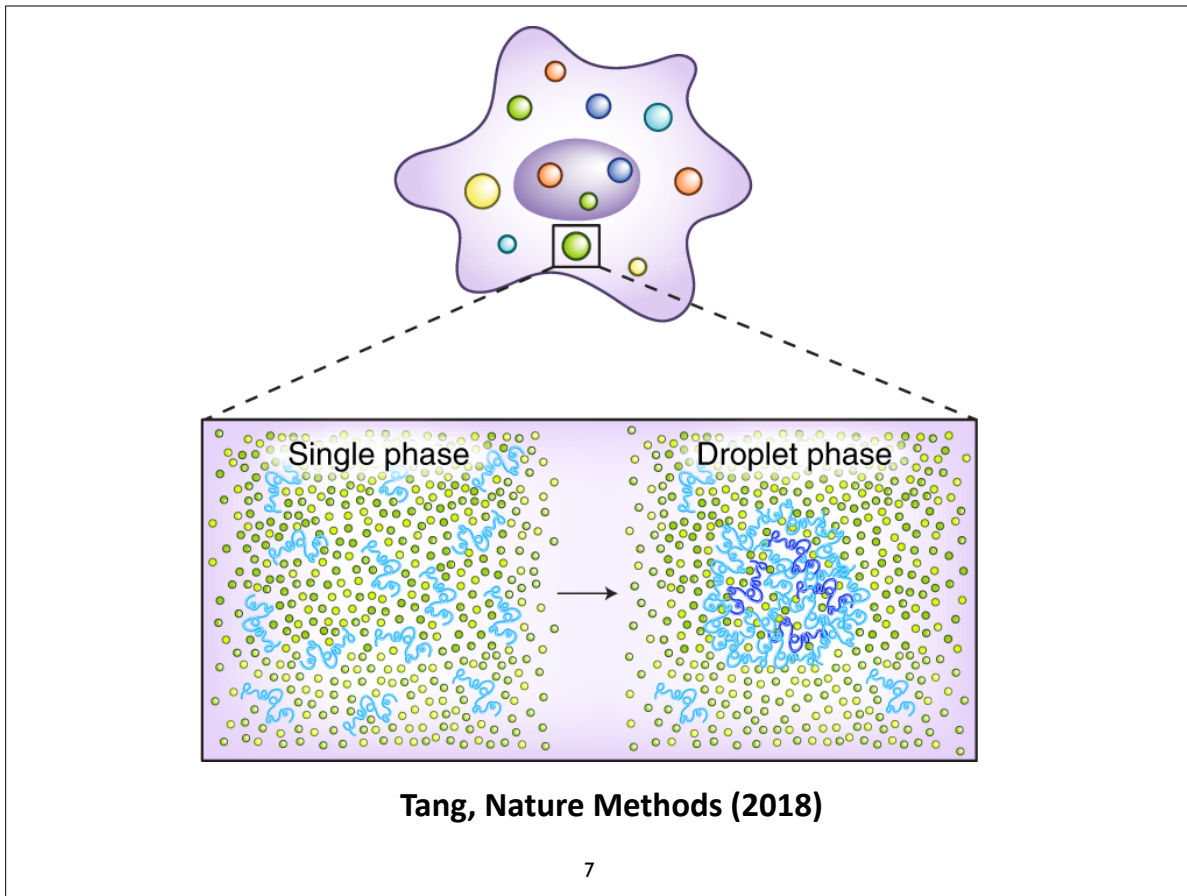
5

## Biomolecular condensates are proposed to form via:

***Phase separation of multivalent protein and RNA molecules***

Jülicher and Hyman, 2014, *Annu. Rev. Cell Biol.*  
Banani,...,Hyman, Rosen, 2017, *Nature Rev. Mol. Cell Biol.*  
Shin, Brangwynne, 2017, *Science*

6



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**We seek an appropriate theoretical framework for describing phase transitions of multivalent protein & RNA molecules?**

Fuxreiter, Wu, 2016, *Cell*  
Lin, Forman-Kay, Chain, 2018, *Biochemistry*  
Choi, Holehouse, Pappu, 2020, *Annu. Rev. Biophys.*

8

8

**Multivalent protein and RNA molecules  
are biological instantiations of *associative*  
*polymers***

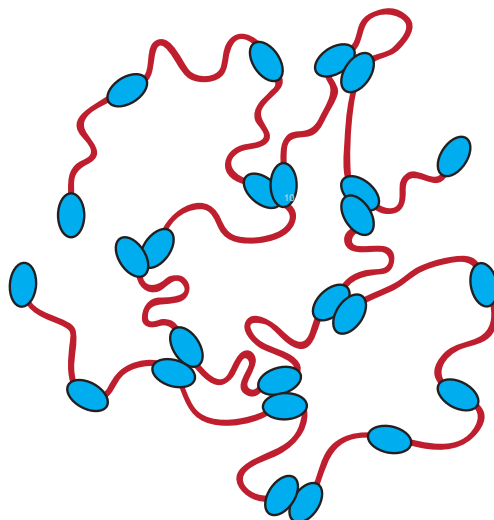
Semenov & Rubinstein, *Macromolecules* (1998)

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## Associative Polymers

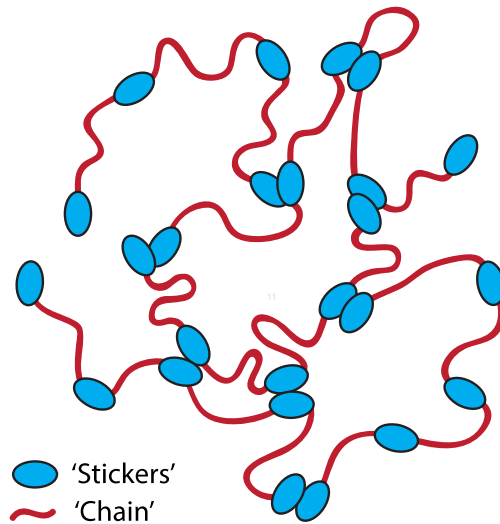
**Stickers** interspersed by **Spacers**



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## Stickers vs. Spacers



***Stickers interact preferentially with one another to form physical crosslinks***

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How do we tell *stickers*  
from *spacers*?

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## We shall first consider disordered low-complexity domains

GSMASASSSQ**R**GRSGSGN**F**GGGRGGG**F**GGND**N**FGRGGN**F**SGRGG**F**G  
GSRGGGG**Y**GGSGD**G**YNG**F**GN**D**GSN**F**GGGG**S**Y**N**D**F**GN**Y**NNQSSN**F**GP  
MKGGN**F**GG**R**SSG**P**YGGGG**Q**Y**F**AK**P**R**N**QGG**Y**GGSSSSSS**Y**GS**G**RR**F**

Folded  
domains

Intrinsically  
disordered

hnRNP-A1



**RRM:** RNA Recognition Motif

**LCD:** Low Complexity Domain

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We leverage *thermodynamic principles* of phase separation

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Phase Separation is a *density transition* described by a coexistence curve

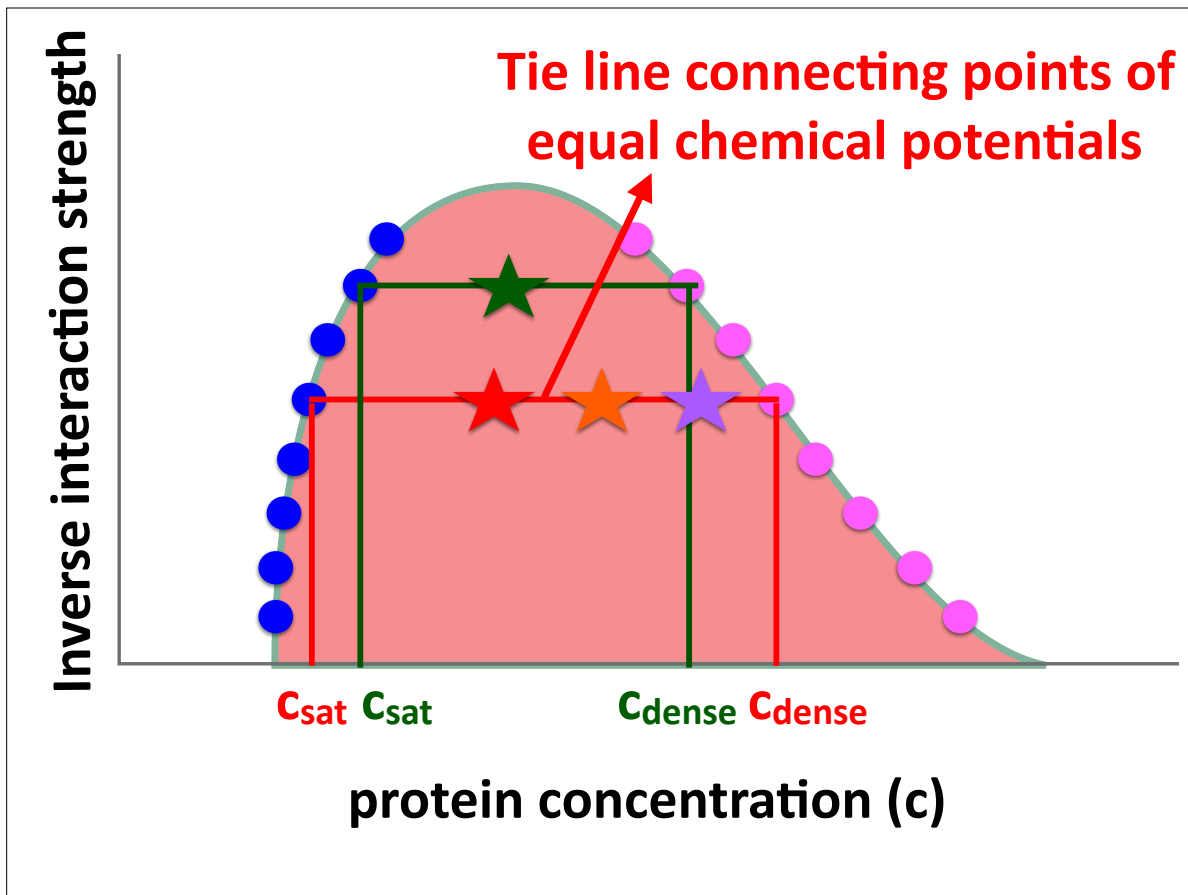
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We shall first orient ourselves using a *pseudo-binary (protein + “solvent”)* mixture as an example

16

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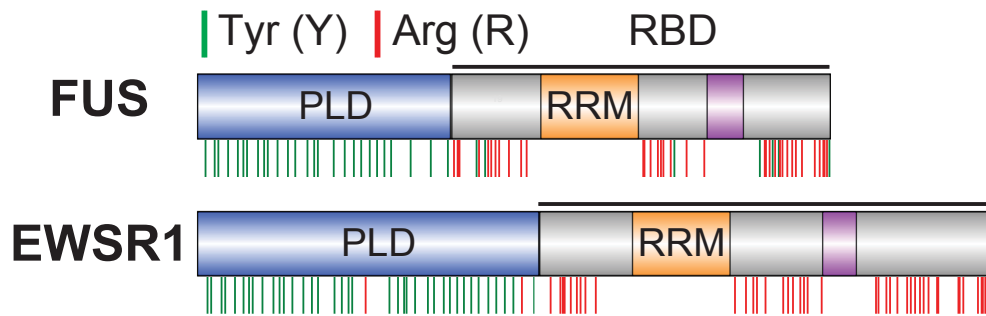
## Zeroth-order criteria for delineating *stickers* vs. *spacers*

Changes to *stickers* will change  $C_{sat}$   
 whereas changes to *spacers* will change  
 material properties and the cooperativity  
 of phase separation

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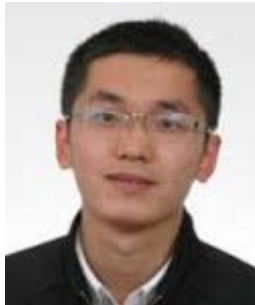
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## Demonstration using proteins with disordered prion-like domains (PLDs) and RNA binding domains (RBDs)

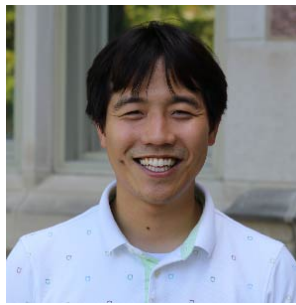


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**Jie Wang**



**Jeong-Mo Choi**



**Alex Holehouse**



**Simon Alberti**

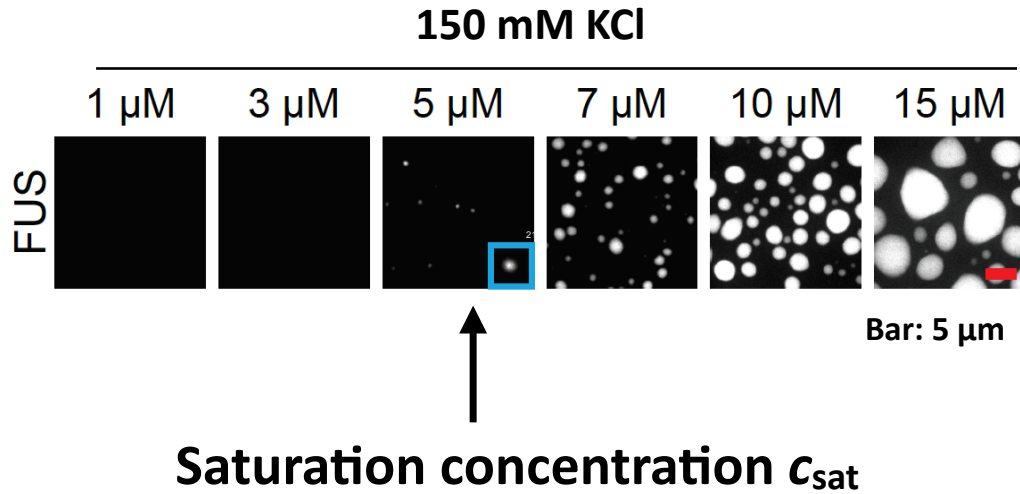


**Tony Hyman**

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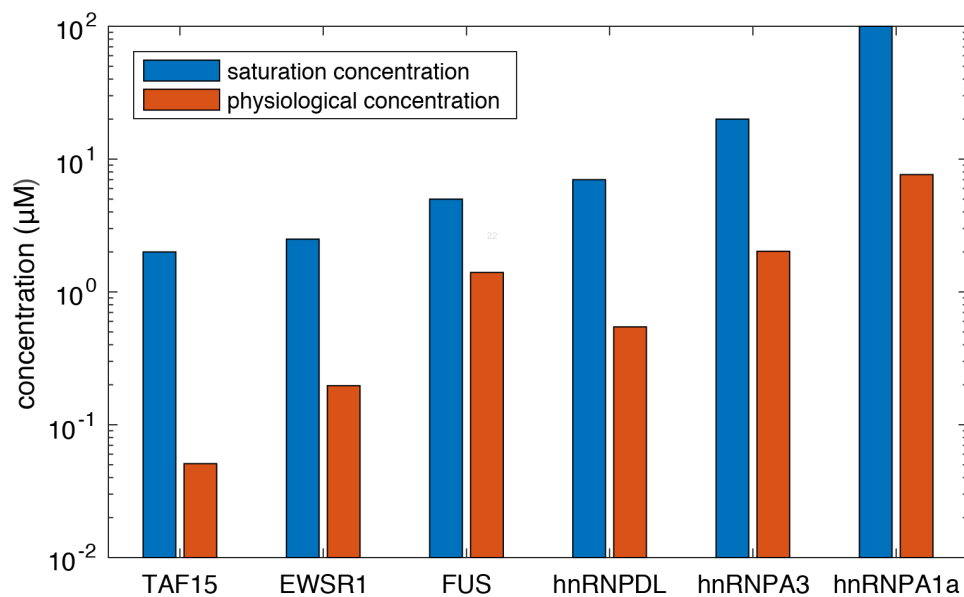
## In vitro Phase separation of FUS



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## $c_{sat}$ values of disordered FUS family proteins are sequence-specific



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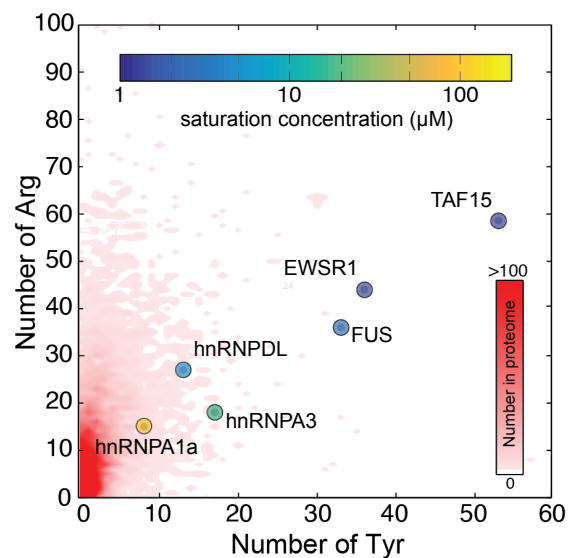


# Determinants of sequence-specific $c_{\text{sat}}$ values?

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## Large numbers of Tyr in PLD and Arg in RBD

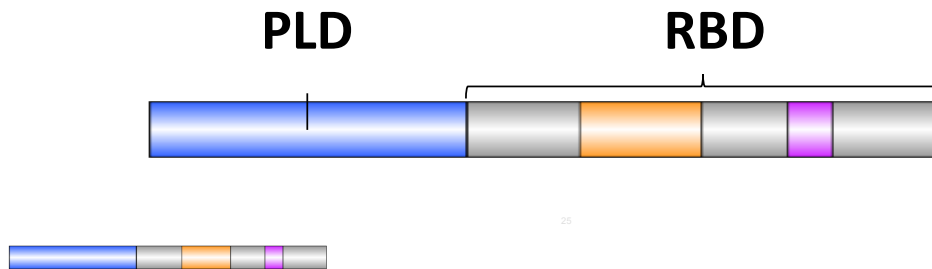


High frequencies of Tyr and Arg are uncommon

24

24

## Phase separation requires Tyr (Y) *and* Arg (R)

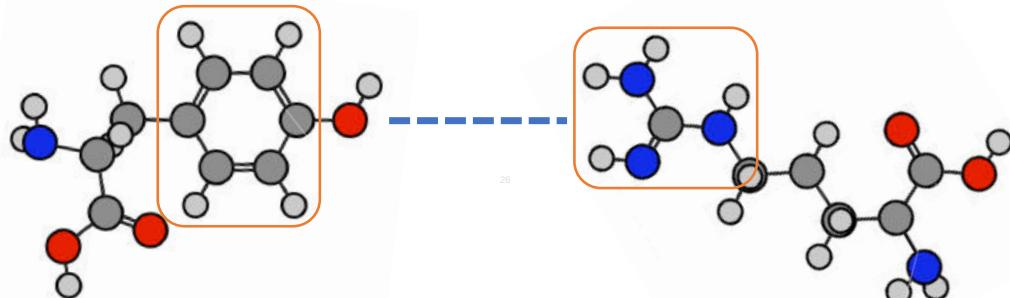


$c_{\text{sat}} = 2 \mu\text{M}$   
(75 mM KCl)

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## Amino Acid Stickers

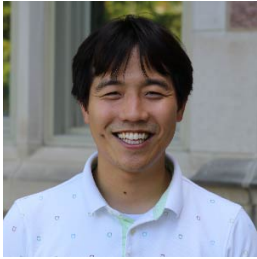


Tyrosine

Arginine

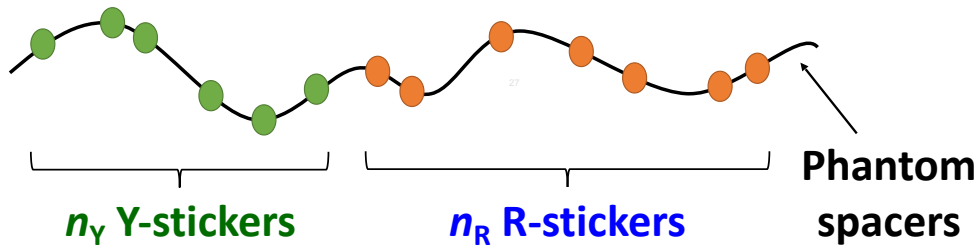
26

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Jeong-Mo Choi

## Mean-field stickers and spacers model



Wang, Choi, Holehouse,...,Pappu, Alberti, Hyman, *Cell* (2018)  
Choi, Holehouse, Pappu *Annu. Rev. Biophys.* (2020)

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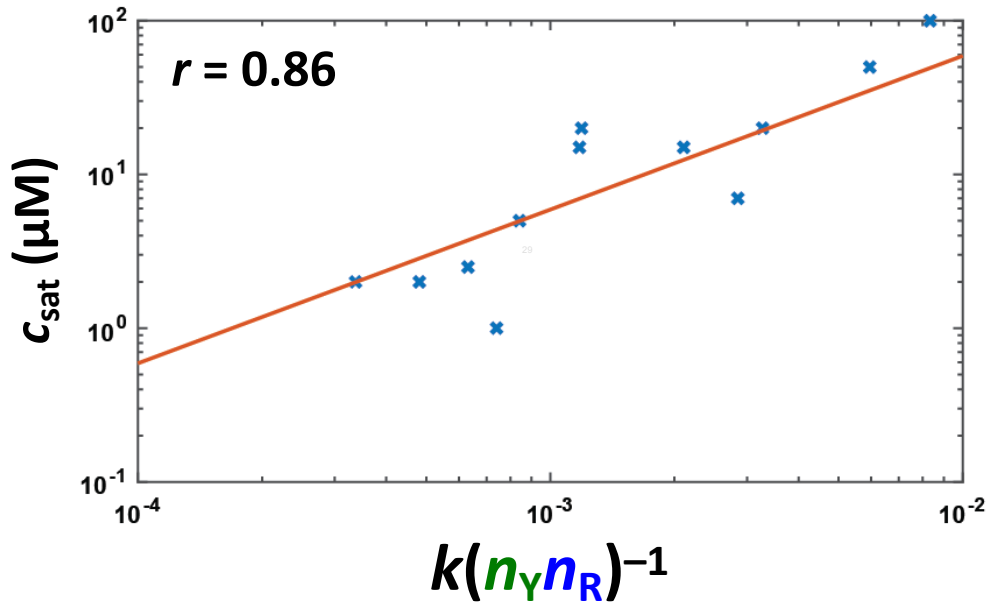
Theory predicts  $c_{\text{sat}}$  based on joint valence of TYR and ARG

$$c_{\text{sat}} = k \left( n_Y n_R \right)^{-1} \mu\text{M}$$

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Mean field theory for associative polymers is a good predictor of experimentally derived  $c_{\text{sat}}$



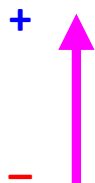
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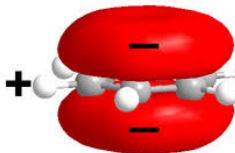
**Working hypothesis:** Stickers are distinguished by intrinsic multipole moments



Monopole moment (charge):  $q$  (e)



Dipole moment:  $\mu$  (D)



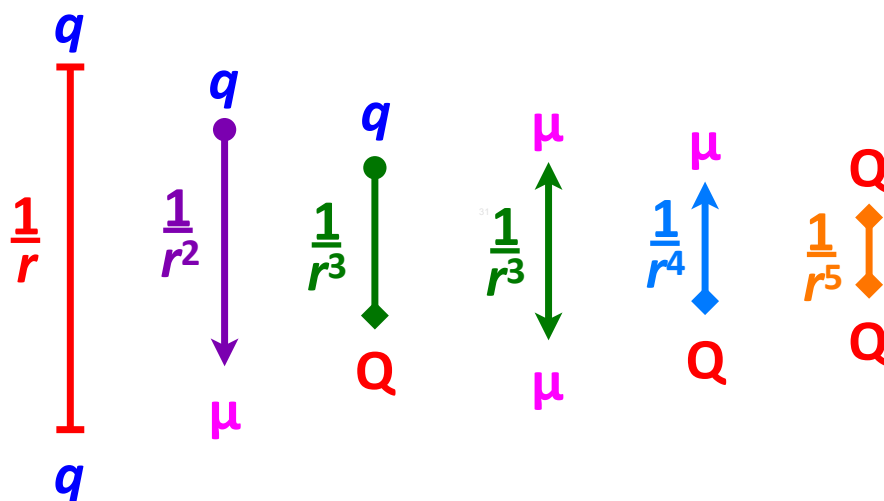
Quadrupole moment:  $Q_{zz}$  (De)

30

30

**q: Monopole;  $\mu$ : Dipole; Q: Quadrupole**

Decreasing spatial range



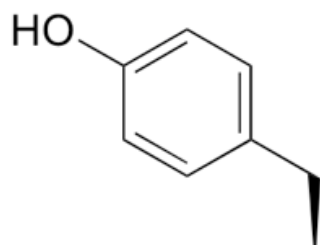
Burley & Petsko, Adv. Protein Chem. (1988)

Pappu et al., J. Comput. Chem. (1996)

31

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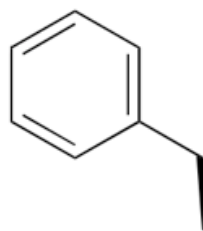
**Intrinsic valence can be defined  
by multipole moments**



Tyr (Y)

$\mu = 1.48 \text{ D}$   
 $Q_{zz} \approx -5 \text{ D}\text{\AA}$

vs.



Phe (F)

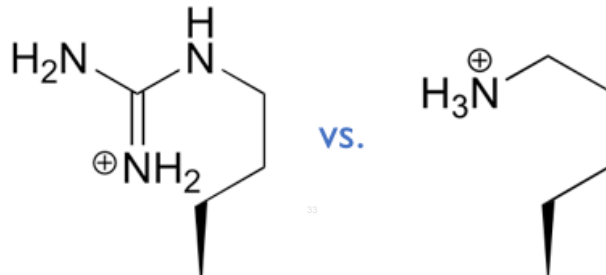
$\mu = 0 \text{ D}$   
 $Q_{zz} \approx -5 \text{ D}\text{\AA}$

32

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## Intrinsic valence can be defined by multipole moments



Arg (R)

Lys (K)

$$\begin{aligned} q &= 1 e \\ \mu &= 0 D \\ Q_{zz} &\approx -25 \text{ D}\text{\AA} \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} q &= 1 e \\ \mu &= 0 D \\ Q_{zz} &\approx 0 \text{ D}\text{\AA} \end{aligned}$$

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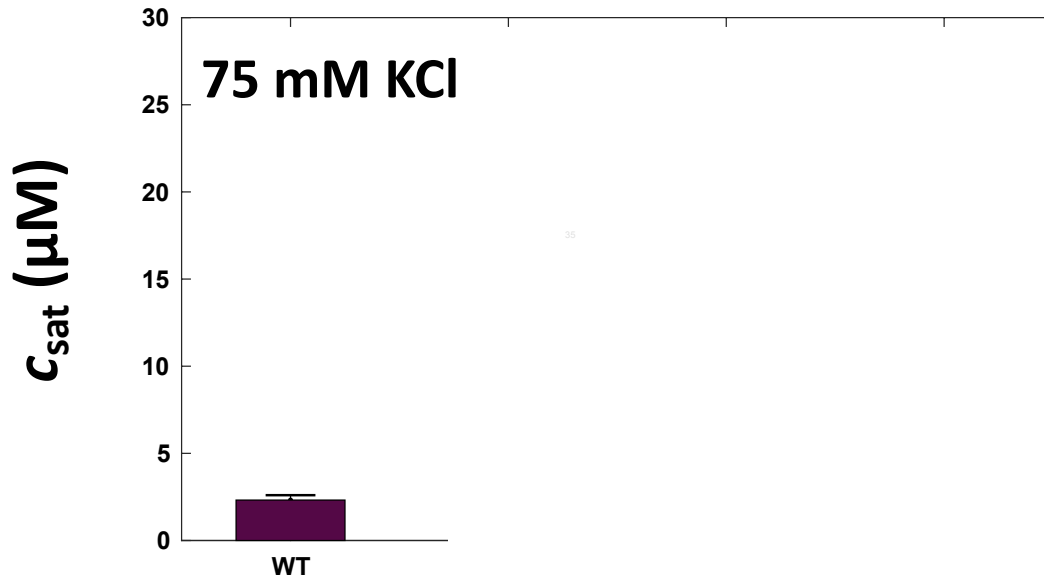
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Prediction is that **Arg-Tyr** make for stronger stickers than **Arg-Phe**, **Lys-Tyr**, and **Lys-Phe**

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## Tyr and Arg: stronger stickers than Phe and Lys



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**Cationic and aromatic stickers encode a hierarchy of interaction ranges and interaction strengths**

See: Nott et al., (2015) *Mol Cell*; Brady et al., (2017) *PNAS*,  
Vernon et al., (2018) *eLife*

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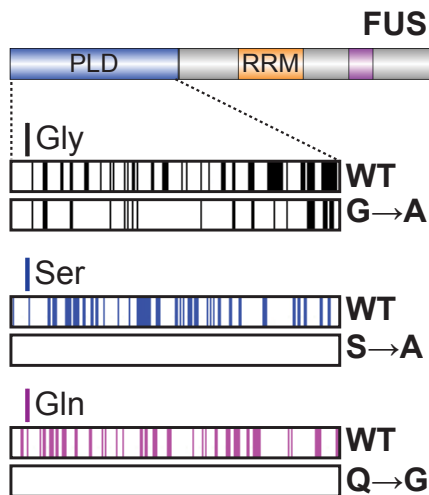
**FUS family proteins  $\neq$   $(YYY...YY)_n-(RR...RR)_m$**

Sequence features of *spacers* are important determinants of material properties and the cooperativity of phase transitions

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**Spacers are sequence regions that have negligible impact on  $c_{\text{sat}}$**

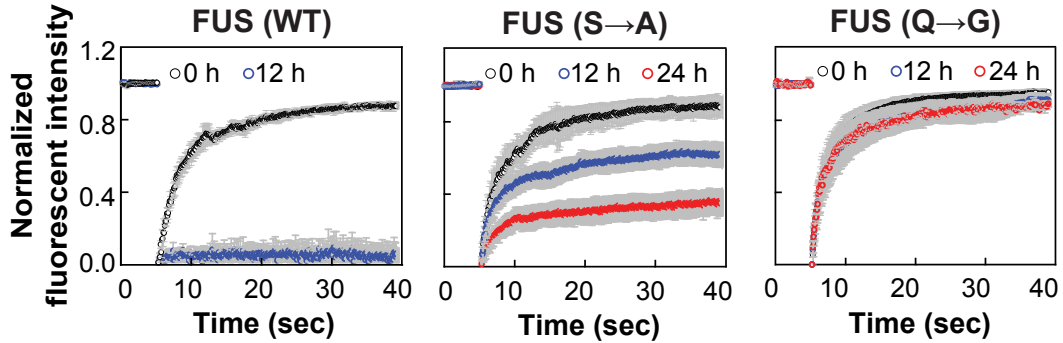


**$c_{\text{sat}} \approx 3 - 5 \mu\text{M}$**

**...while impacting material properties**

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**FRAP data show that Gly-rich spacers enhance rates of molecular exchange across phase boundaries**

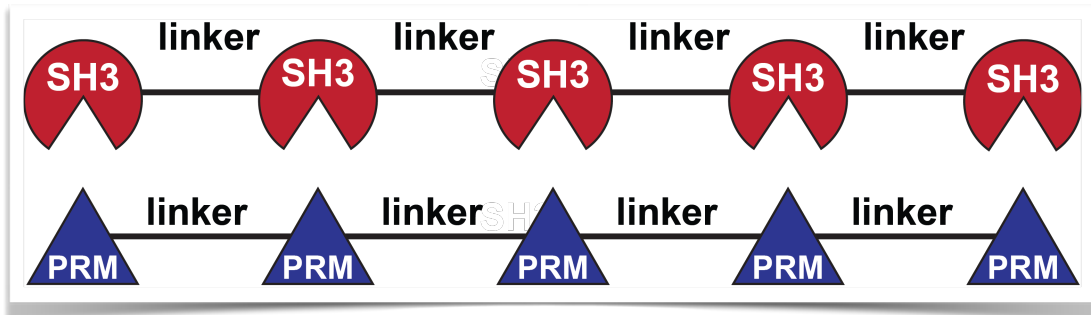


**Rates of molecular exchange are tied to rates of breaking and making physical crosslinks and this is governed by intrinsic valence of spacer residues**

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**Other examples of *stickers-and-spacers***  
 Folded domains connected by *intrinsically disordered* linkers



Li et al., *Nature* (2012)  
 Harmon et al., *eLife* (2017)

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**Sequence-encoded effective solvation volumes ( $v_{es}$ ) of disordered linkers determine whether percolation (the formation of system-spanning networks) is driven by phase separation or if it occurs without phase separation**

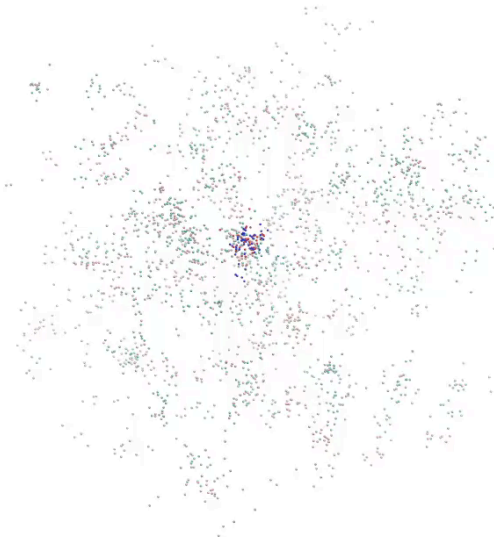
Harmon, Holehouse, Rosen, Pappu *eLife* (2017)

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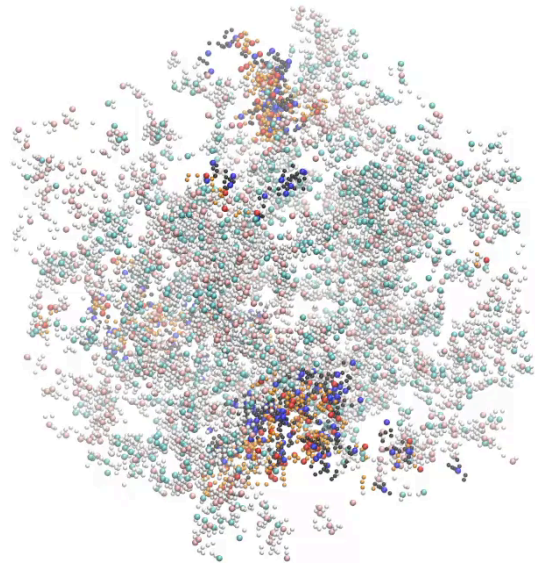
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## Phase behavior of **poly-SH3** + **poly-PRM**

Linkers with  $v_{es} = 0$



Linkers with  $v_{es} \gg 0$



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## **Stickers and spacers come in different flavors**

**There is an evolved synergy between structure and disorder and identities of stickers and spacers will be context dependent**

Harmon, Holehouse, Rosen, Pappu, *eLife* (2017)  
Wang, Choi, Holehouse, ..., Pappu, Alberti, Hyman, *Cell* (2018)  
Choi, Holehouse, Pappu *Annu. Rev. Biophys.* (2020)

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**Biomolecular condensates have hundreds of distinct protein and RNA components**

**We have developed a lattice-based engine to simulate phase transitions of coarse-grained descriptions of multivalent protein and RNA molecules in multicomponent systems**

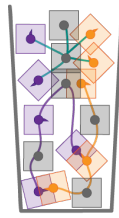
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Jeong-Mo Choi



Furqan Dar



# LASSI

Lattice Simulation Engine For Sticker And Spacer Interactions

<https://github.com/Pappulab/LASSI>

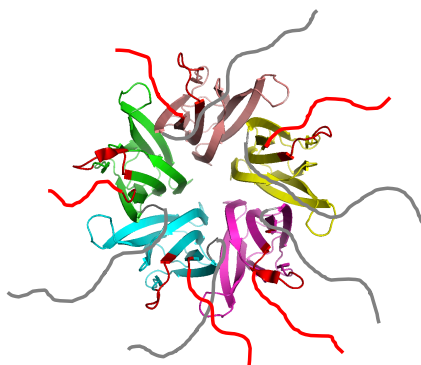
Choi, Dar, Pappu *PLoS Comput. Biol.* (2019)

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## Example of a multicomponent system

### NPM1 + rpL5

#### N130



#### rpL5

+

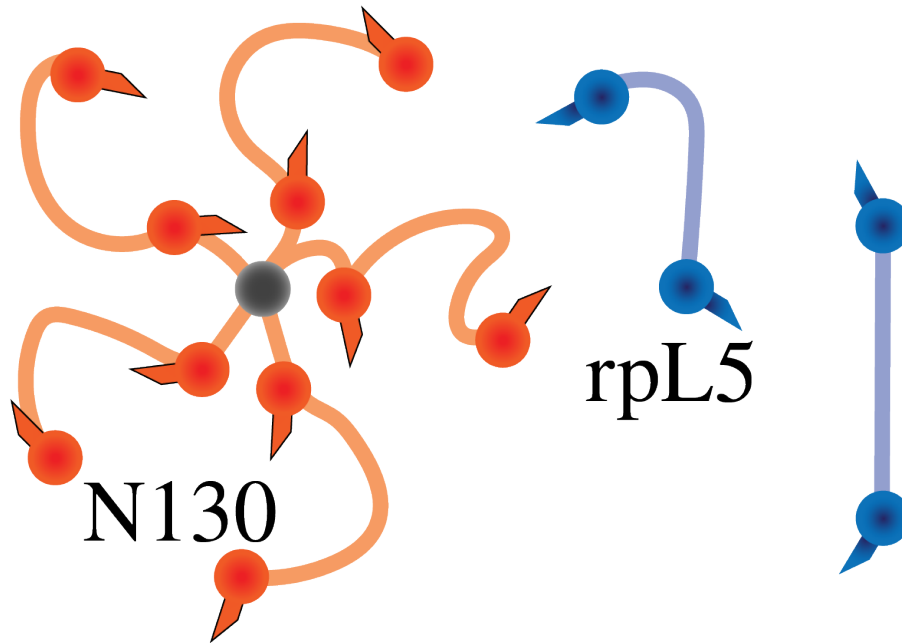


Mitrete et al., *eLife*. (2018)

Mitrete et al., *Nature Commun.* (2018)

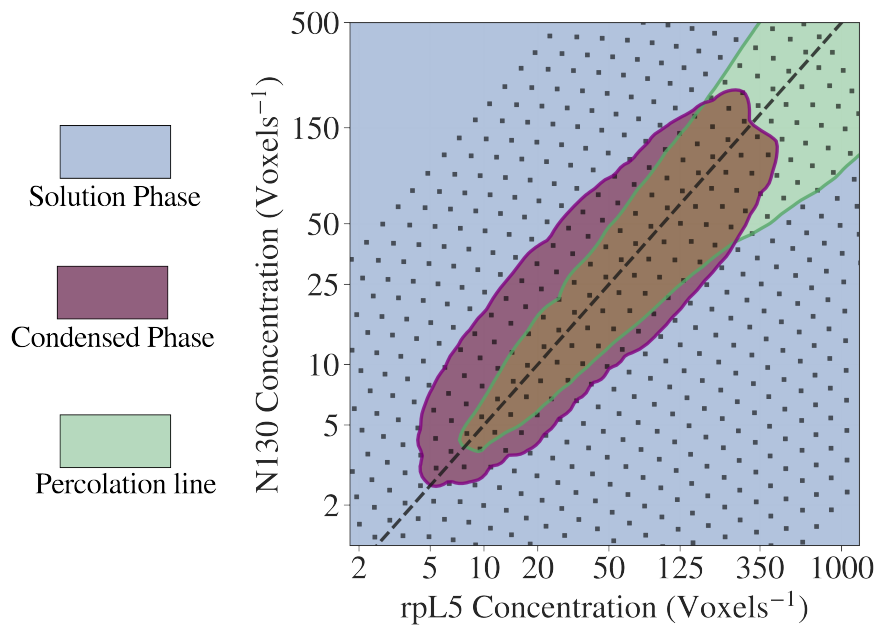
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## N130 + rpL5



47

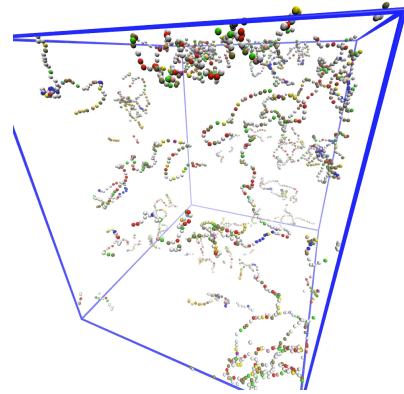
## Phase boundaries for multicomponent systems are closed loops



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**Condensates  
are really *network fluids*  
defined by physical  
crosslinks among stickers**



**Dias, Araujo, Telo da Gama, *Adv. Colloid. Int. Sci.* (2017)**

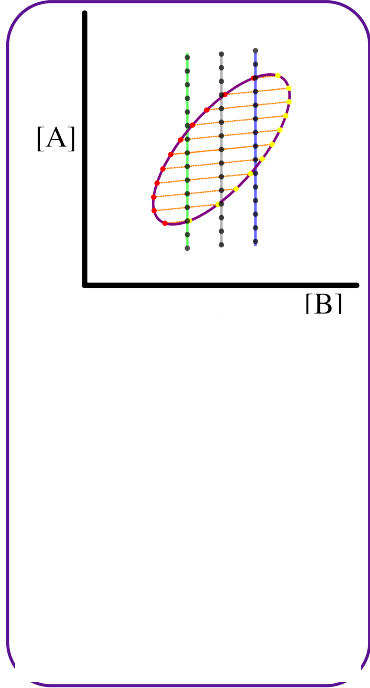
**Harmon, Holehouse, Rosen, Pappu *eLife* (2017)**

**Choi, Dar, Pappu *PLoS Comput. Biol.* (2019)**

49

**When heterotypic interactions dominate,  
the concept of a saturation concentration  
ceases to apply**

50



51

**Demonstrates how phase behavior is controlled by the combination of stoichiometry, affinities, valence, and extent of crosslinking**

52

***Stickers* and *spacers* framework  
applied to LCD-RNA phase behavior**

53



**Steven Boeynaems**



**Alex Holehouse**



**Venera Weinhardt**



**Aaron Gitler**

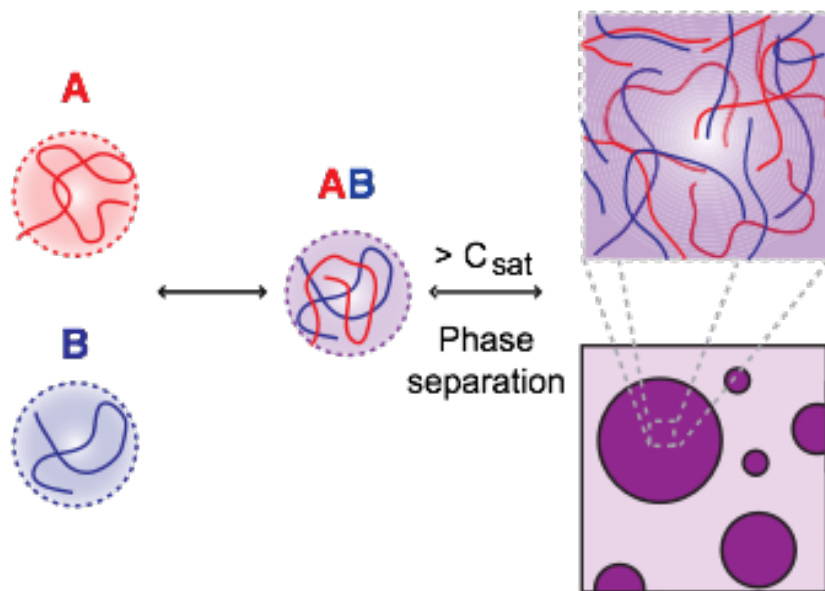
54

# **(PR)<sub>30</sub> + homopolymeric RNA**

Boeynaems, Holehouse, Weinhardt et al.  
*PNAS* (2019) **116**: 7889

55

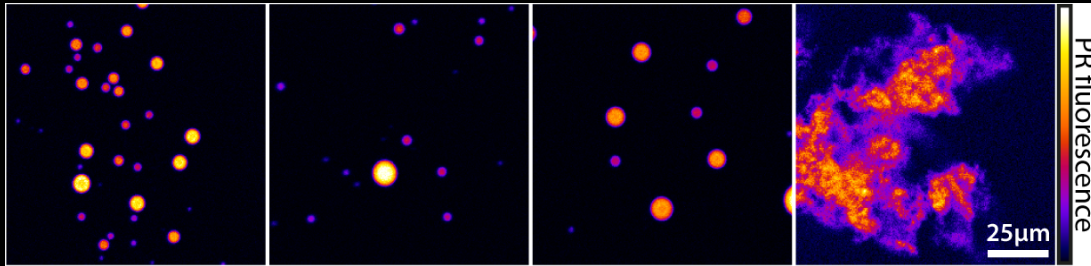
## **Polyelectrolytes undergo phase separation via complex coacervation**



56

56

**(PR)<sub>30</sub> condensates have irregular morphologies with poly rG**



**poly-rA**

**poly-rU**

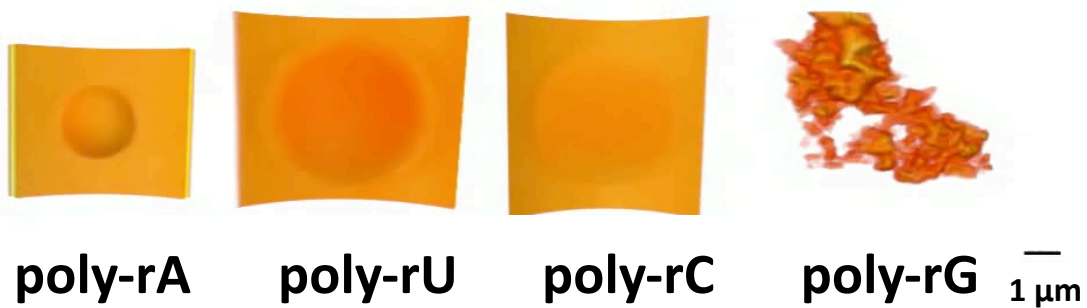
**poly-rC**

**poly-rG**

**100 mM K<sub>2</sub>HPO<sub>4</sub>/KH<sub>2</sub>PO<sub>4</sub>, pH 7.0**

57

**(PR)<sub>30</sub> coacervation with homopolymeric RNAs  
- Soft x-ray tomography (SXT)**



**poly-rA**

**poly-rU**

**poly-rC**

**poly-rG** 1 µm

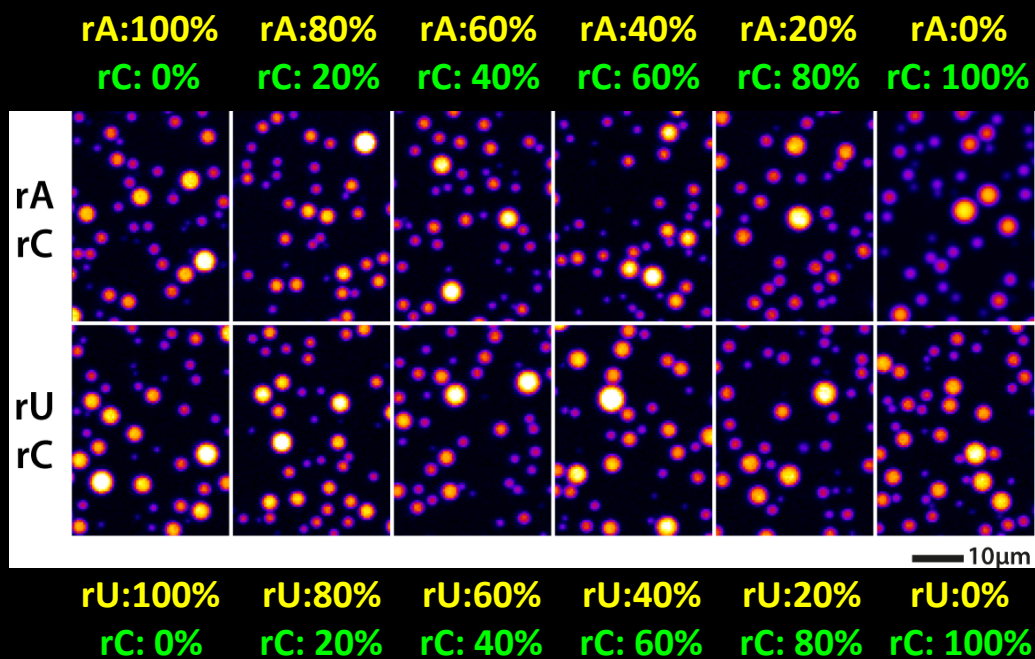
58

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# Hypothesis: RNA structure impacts condensate morphology

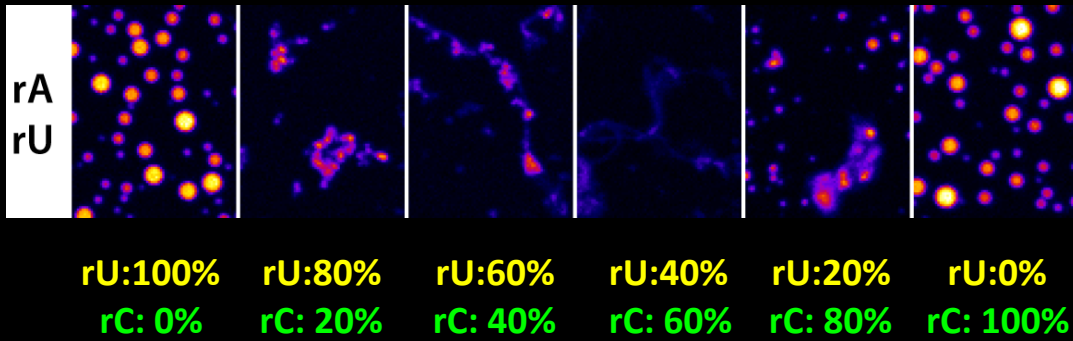
59

(PR)<sub>30</sub> coacervation with mixture of *non-base pairing* RNAs yields spherical condensates



60

**(PR)<sub>30</sub> coacervation with mixture of *base-pairing* RNAs alters condensate morphologies**



**100 mM K<sub>2</sub>HPO<sub>4</sub>/KH<sub>2</sub>PO<sub>4</sub>, pH 7.0**

61

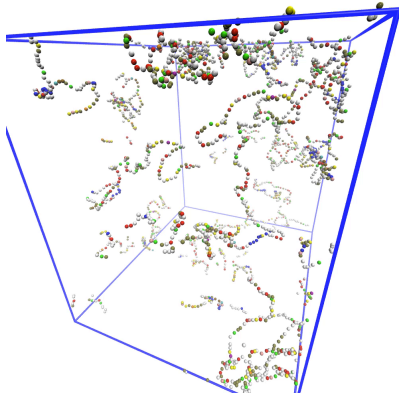
**Is the impact of RNA structure  
on condensate morphology  
stable or metastable?**

62



## Polymer Interactions in Multicomponent Mixtures

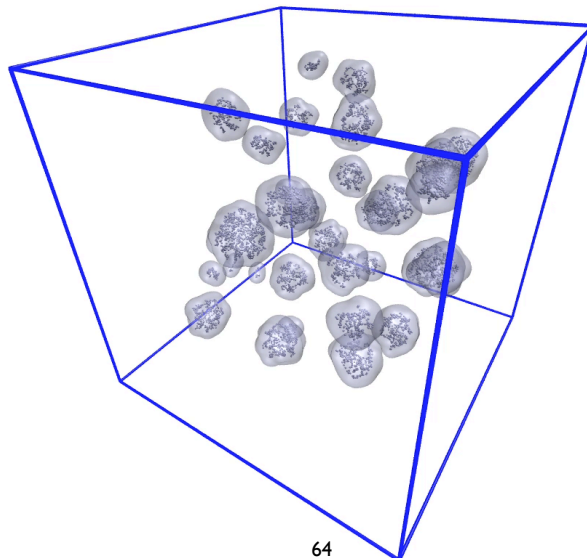
- Monte Carlo Simulation Engine
- Single-bead per residue on lattice
- Ultra coarse-grained RNA
- Learned forcefield captures chemical heterogeneity



**Alex Holehouse**

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**Coarse-grained simulations of  $(PR)_{30}$  + poly-rA shows the formation of spherical droplets**

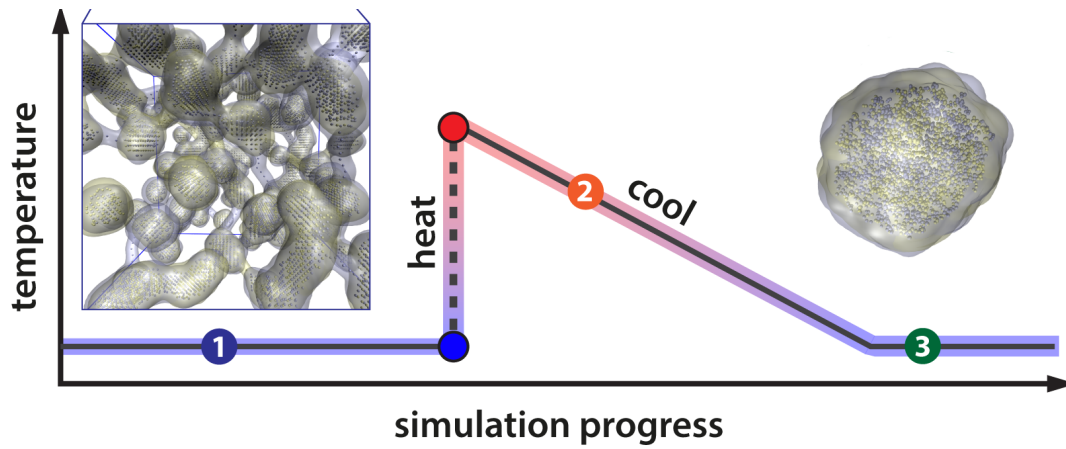


64

64



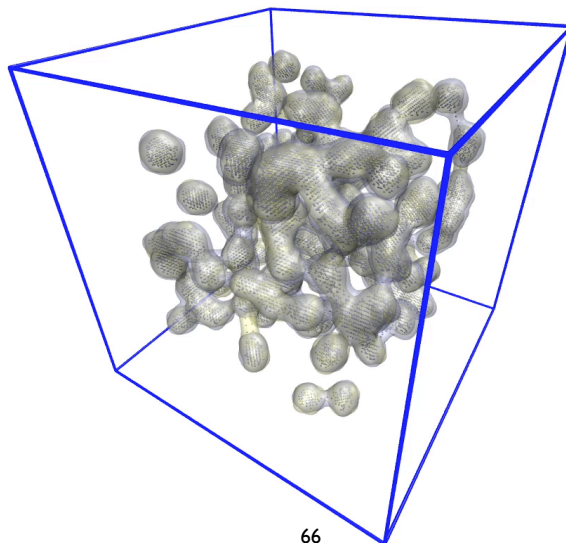
## Arrested networks are disrupted by heating followed by annealing to spherical assemblies



65

65

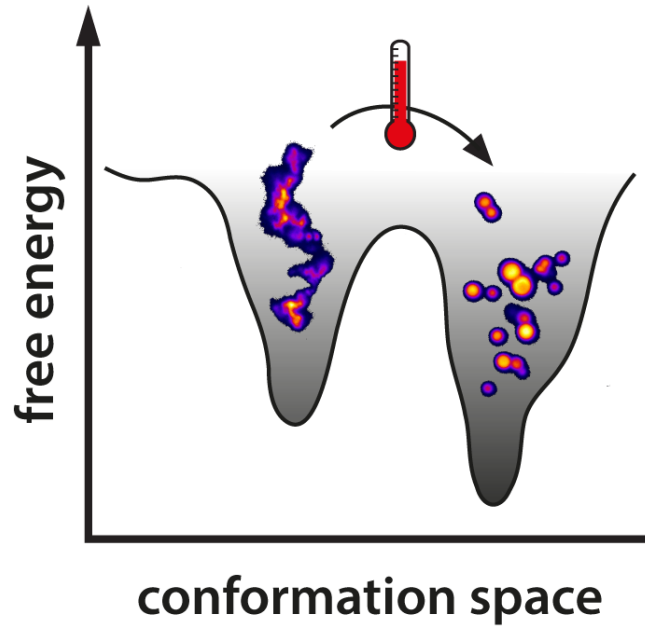
## Coarse-grained simulations of $(PR)_{30}$ + poly-rA + poly-rU



66

66

## Networks are examples of dynamically arrested phase separation

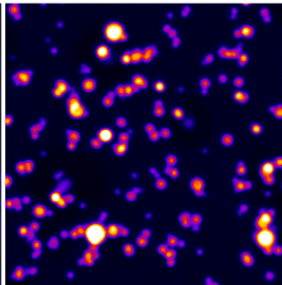
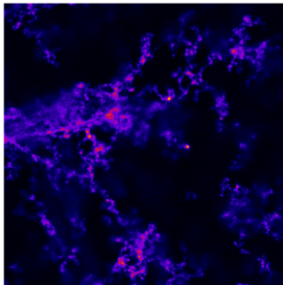


67

67

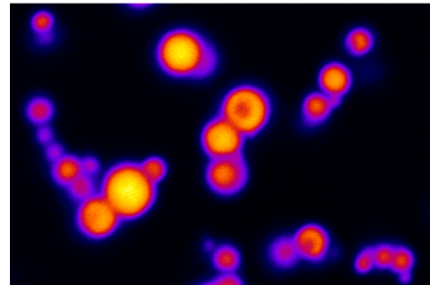
**Heating followed by annealing leads to disruption of filamentous networks and equilibration to spherical condensates**

60% rA + 40% rU >> 5min @ 95°C



25µm

higher magnification



5µm

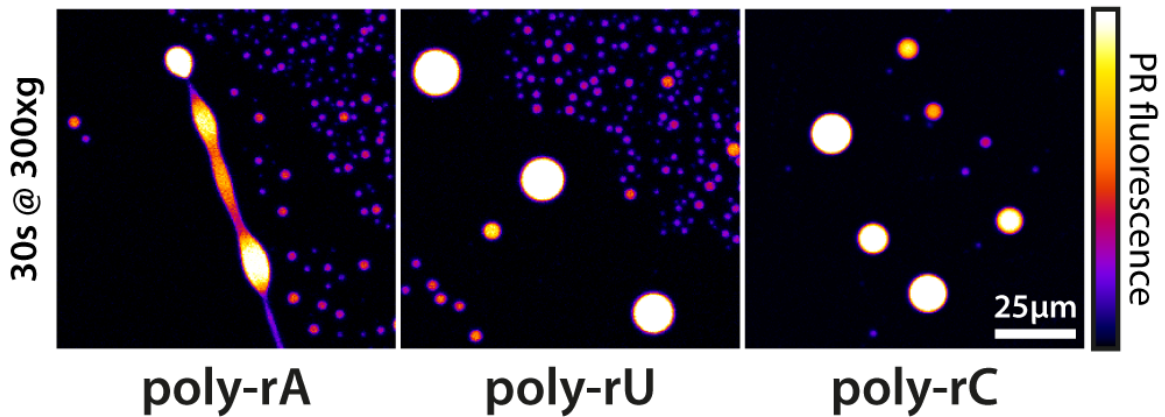
68

# Impact of nucleobase (anion) vs. amino acid (cation)?

69

## Nucleobase impacts dynamics of fusion

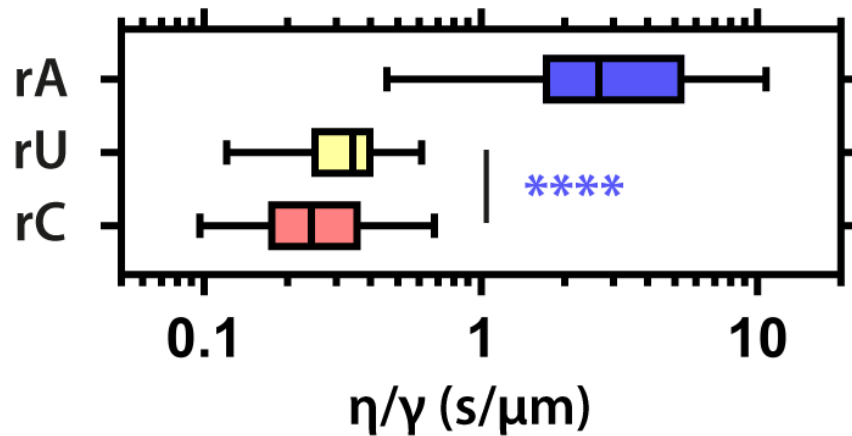
250 $\mu$ M PR<sub>30</sub> + 1 $\mu$ g/ $\mu$ l poly-rN



70

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## Inverse capillary velocity reveals differences between purines vs. pyrimidines

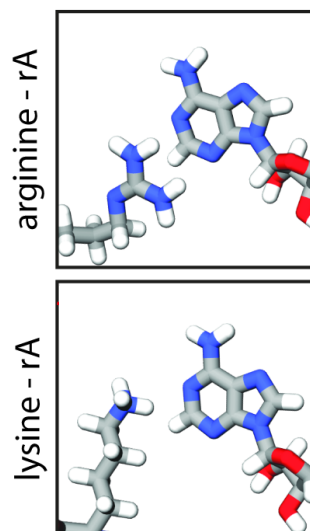


Condensates formed by coacervation with poly-purines slow fusion

71

71

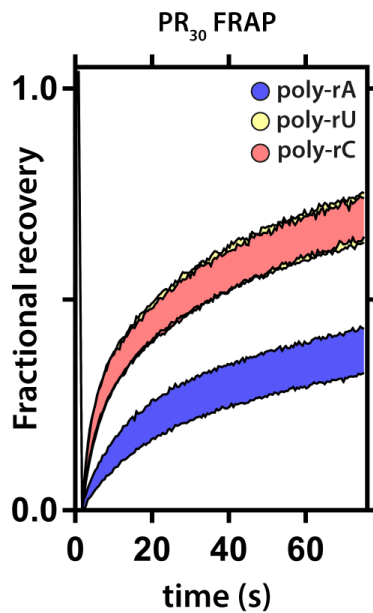
## Nature of the amino acid cation also impacts dynamics of fusion



72

72

## Dependence of internal protein dynamics on nucleobase is also governed by type of cation



73

73

## Phase behavior of multicomponent systems

$n$  polymers plus solvent can have  $n+1$  coexisting phases

74

**Homogeneous mixture of  
solvent, p1, and p2**

75

75

**Enriched in solvent + p1**

**Enriched in p2**

76

76

**Enriched in solvent + p2**

**Enriched in p1**

77

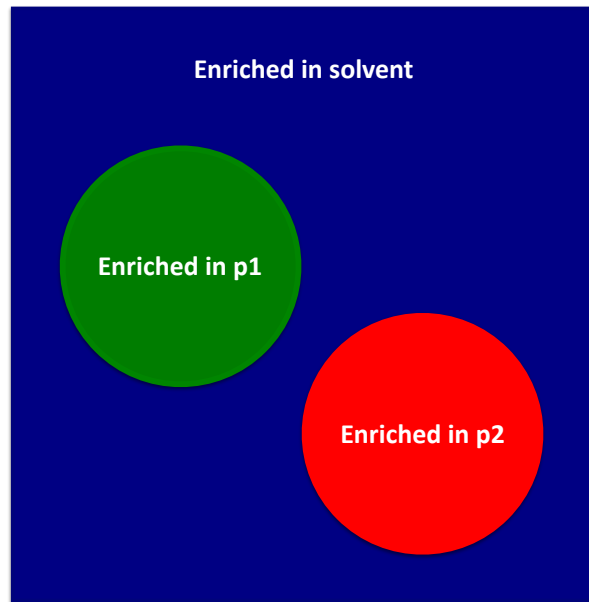
77

**Enriched in solvent**

**Enriched in p1  
and p2**

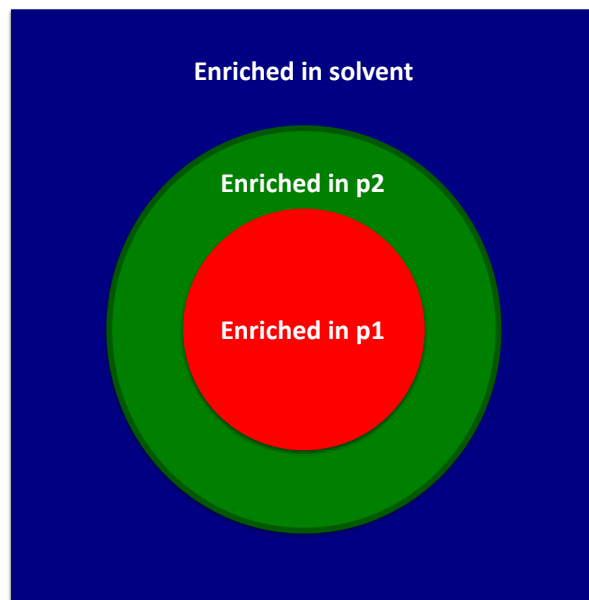
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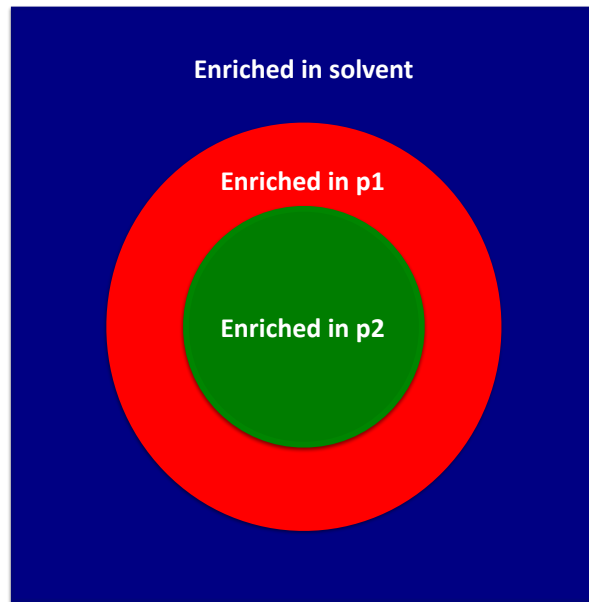
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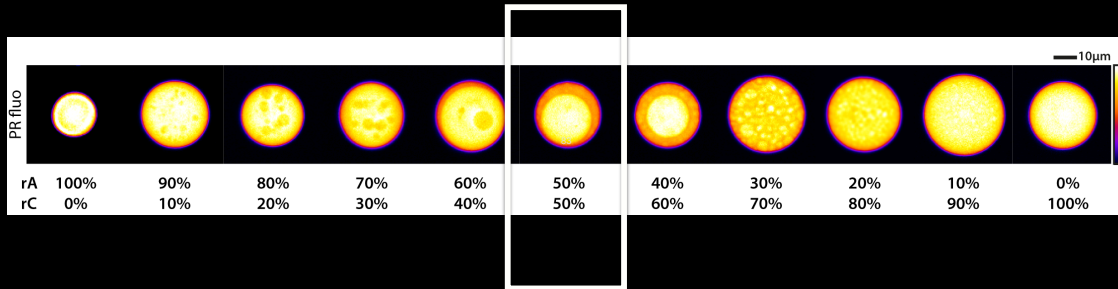
81

81

**Mixtures of  $(PR)_{30}$  + poly-rA +  
poly-rU?**

82

# Mixtures of $(PR)_{30}$ + poly-rA + poly-rU



100 mM  $K_2HPO_4/KH_2PO_4$ , pH 7.0

83

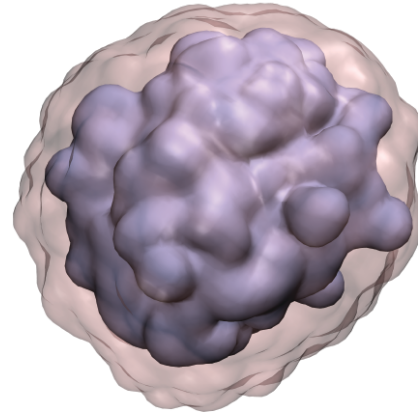
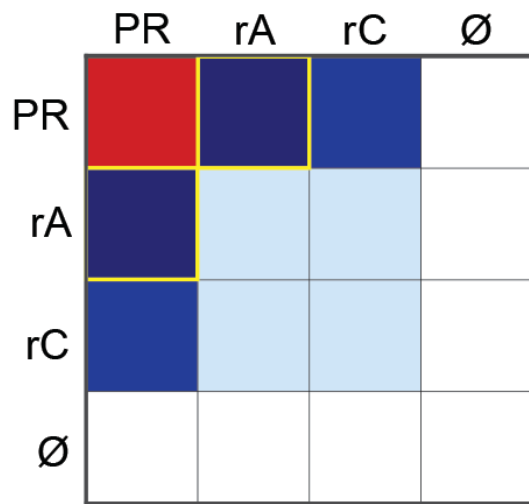
$(PR)_{30}$  + 50% poly-rA + 50% poly-rU



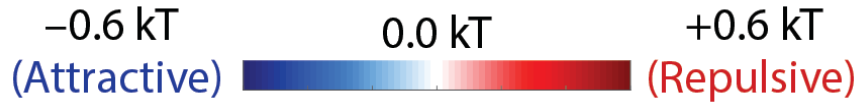
84

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## Stronger (PR)<sub>30</sub> - poly-rA interactions yields poly-rA core and poly-rC shell



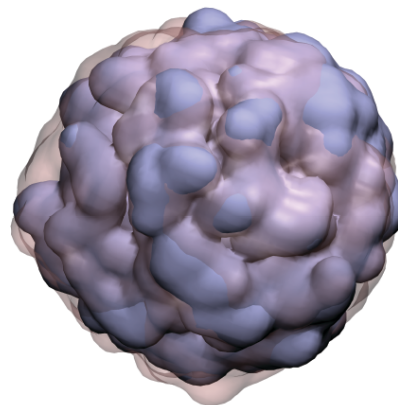
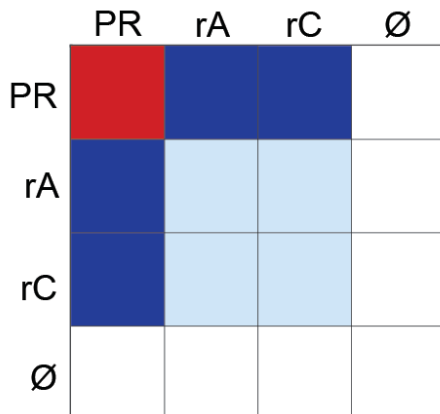
Core + shell



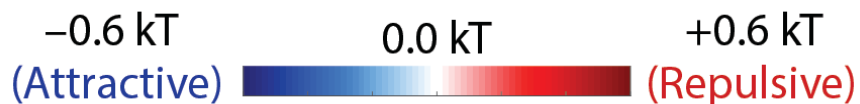
85

85

## Equivalence of interactions abrogates core-shell structure



No core/shell



86

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## Overall Summary

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***RNA structure and composition*** as well as  
***Arg / Lys valence vs. composition*** will  
contribute to driving forces,  
morphologies, dynamics, and spatial  
organization of LCD:RNA condensates

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**Decipherable rules governing the driving forces of condensate formation can be extracted using quantitative deployment of the stickers-and-spacers formalism**

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**Acknowledgments**

90

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## FUNDING



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>>[pappulab.wustl.edu](http://pappulab.wustl.edu)

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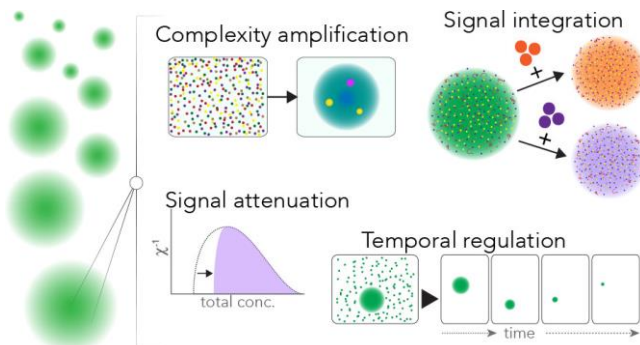
J. Paul Taylor

## Functional Implications of Intracellular Phase Transitions

Alex S. Holehouse\* and Rohit V. Pappu\*

Cite this: *Biochemistry* 2018, 57, 17, 2415-2423  
 Publication Date: January 11, 2018  
<https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.biochem.7b01136>  
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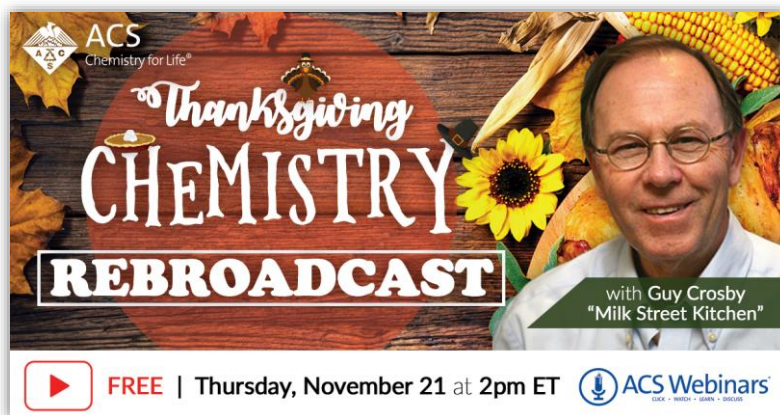
## Abstract

Intracellular environments are heterogeneous milieus comprised of macromolecules, osmolytes, and a range of assemblies that include membrane-bound organelles and membraneless biomolecular condensates. The latter are nonstoichiometric assemblies of protein and RNA molecules. They represent distinct phases and form via intracellular phase transitions. Here, we present insights from recent studies and provide a perspective on how phase transitions that lead to biomolecular condensates might contribute to cellular functions.

<https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.biochem.7b01136>

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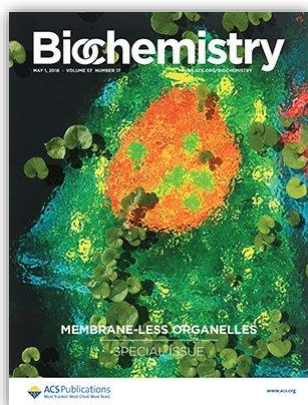
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May 1, 2018, Volume 57, Issue 17, Pages 2403-2564

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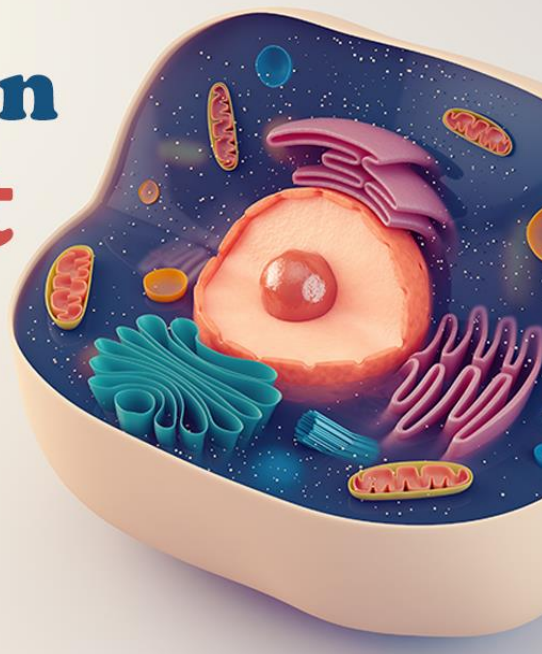




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