

# Wits students put social networking to use

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A TEAM of five students from Wits University will represent South Africa at the international Genetically Engineered Machine (iGEM) competition in Amsterdam next month.

The iGEM competition challenges students from various disciplines to come up with a biological machine that performs a new and useful function.

The South African team hopes to return with a gold medal for their concept called Bio-Tweet using synthetic biology. Their machine mimics the communication system of social networks like Facebook and Twitter.

"We have designed bacteria to carry messages within a network, passing the



**TWEETING BACTERIA:**  
Wits University's Ezio Fok, Gloria Hlongwane, Sasha Reznichenko, Natasia Kruger and Bradley Marques.

information on to other bacteria, who can then respond by performing a task or signalling to the user what type of information has been received," said Ezio Fok, a biology student.

The students will compete with 180 teams from around the world, including teams from Harvard, Yale and Cambridge universities.

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