

Introduction

This manual was compiled to provide a single resource that outlines the different aspects of building an iGEM team and preparing to compete at the Giant Jamboree. Please be advised that it is not meant to provide scientific or technical information about synthetic biology; however, we have listed some resources at the end of this manual which would provide that information.

We have also created a video series based on the content in this manual that contains relevant information for new iGEM teams. If you weren't made aware of this print manual through our series, you can find the videos here:

We've highlighted what has worked for us as a team as a part of this manual. We've also consulted other teams for their tips and success stories. We hope this information is useful and can help your team succeed.

Best of luck in your iGEM endeavours!

Sincerely,

iGEM Calgary 2017

Engaging Student Interest

Engaging student interest in iGEM is important to have a successful team. Even if everyone who is initially interested does not end up on your team, increasing public awareness of iGEM (and synthetic biology as a whole) in your school or community can be beneficial to your team as your project continues. Therefore, we have compiled some strategies which have been successful at engaging students in past years.

Tip #1: Explain what synthetic biology is using hands-on activities

- A pipetting demo is a safe and easy way to demonstrate lab skills while engaging students
- Strawberry DNA extraction experiment
 - This can be done in less than an hour and is a great way for students to see physical evidence of (the usually abstract) concept of genes and DNA

Tip #2: Use simple language.

- Explain things in a manner that will make sense to students
- Avoid using jargon or technical language
- Define/explain necessary terms and acronyms
 - Confusion/technical presentation might discourage students because it'll seem too complicated for them to understand

Tip #3: Promote or showcase work done by past iGEM teams (which are geographically close or somehow relevant to you) as a means of showing students what can be done in an iGEM project.

- Look for other teams' social media content or wikis
- Maybe reach out and have team members from those teams present at your info night to talk about their work?

Tip #4: Explain the benefits of participating in iGEM to students (classroom visits)
(Can explain how all the points listed below will benefit future career/education)

- Apply science/math knowledge
- Hands-on lab research experience
- Interdisciplinary collaborations
- Problem solving, teamwork, project management, communication skills
- Travel to Boston
- For high school students: iGEM provides a huge advantage over other students (as not many students have research experience in high school)

Tip #5: Free food at info night (advertise this fact)

- Might entice people who would otherwise feel like they did not have any reason to attend
- If nothing else, this raises awareness for the team within your school or community

Things You'll Need (High School)

iGEM's getting started advice: http://igem.org/Start_A_Team

Tips:

Always be on the lookout for iGEM Alumni or synthetic biologists (mentors) in your community that you can contact for help in setting up, advice on your project, or other resources!

Team

- 8- 15 team members per team. But for starting off, a smaller team is easier to manage and will cost less for the Jamboree
- Try to have a team that is as varied as possible with students with many different interests and skills (eg: wet lab skills, public engagement, wiki coding)
- Team name:
 - Must be less than 20 characters
 - Can contain A-Z, underscore, hyphen
 - Cannot contain spaces, "iGEM", "team", or "synthetic biology", sponsors

PIs/Instructor/Advisors

- Supervisors are responsible for some administrative work, supervising students in the lab and some team organizational details (eg: iGEM competition applications, safety forms, team fees). PIs should attend the Jamboree and they must also be available for contact with iGEM HQ
- Instructors help students out day-to-day
- Advisors provide help, advice, mentorship
- Reach out to your local University → Perhaps a professor is willing to be PI
- High School teachers can also be supervisors/ PIs. In 2017, need at least two PIS and one must be a high school teacher
- Graduate students/undergraduate students (especially those that have been previously involved with iGEM) may be willing to be an advisor. Check out the University's previous iGEM teams and start your search for student advisors there. They can help you, but the students of the team must complete most of the lab work

Administrative

- Requirements change every year, check out full requirements for the year at → http://2017.igem.org/Competition/Team_Requirements (Put respective year instead of 2017)
- Keep an eye on the iGEM calendar, it changes every year → <http://2017.igem.org/Calendar> (Put respective year instead of 2017)
- Competition Applications → iGEM registration handbook; <http://2017.igem.org/Competition/Registration/Handbook>
 - Every team member must create an igem.org user account (PIs, instructors, advisors, students, and anyone else on the team). When applying you will need to include the school you are affiliated with, NOT the team name that was created by the PI during team application, but the name of the actual school → http://igem.org/Account_Apply
 - Team PI must apply for and register the team → http://igem.org/New_Team
- Team roster:
 - iGEM HQ will manage the roster because each participant must submit consent forms. Team members visit join a team page and apply as pending members. Once consent forms are received by iGEM HQ, their application to join the team will be approved. → http://igem.org/Join_Team
 - It is best to have your team roster as complete as possible when registering your team in March, but it must be finalized by the team roster freeze, typically in early September.
- Each high school student and their parent/guardian, PI, and team advisor/mentor must submit *participant consent form* →

http://2017.igem.org/wiki/images/e/e3/2017_iGEMHS-ConsentForm-Participant_final.pdf

- Each high school principal must submit *principal consent form* → http://2017.igem.org/wiki/images/7/71/2017_iGEMHS-ConsentForm-Principal_final.pdf
- Hard copy and original consent forms must be sent to iGEM HQ; address found at <http://2017.igem.org/Competition/Registration>
- Travelling to Boston would be more difficult for high school students → contact your local school board as quickly as possible to sort out traveling (especially if it is international) well before the competition date
- Flights and accommodations should also be booked well in advance to the competition date. If travel is international, ensure months before the competition that all students have valid passports

Finances

- Competition fees can be found here: <http://2018.igem.org/Competition/Registration>. For an updated version, replace “2018” with the current year. We’ve also explained the fee breakdown (as of August 2018) below:
 - Registration: \$4500 USD (late March; credit card, cheque, or wire transfer)
 - Late registration: \$5000 USD (early May; credit card, cheque, or wire transfer)
 - Jamboree attendance: \$695 USD per team member
- Equipment and chemical costs
- Available resources and funding: check with your school to see if there is room in their budget to financially support your team. If not, we’ve detailed some fundraising strategies in a later section of this manual
- Travel fees: Flights and accommodations for at least 4 nights in Boston
- Create a team bank account

Equipment

- Common instruments/equipment needed for synthetic biology:
 - Pipettes (large serological and small, adjustable pipettes ranging in size from <1 uL - 1 mL)
 - Beakers and flasks in all shapes in sizes
 - Graduated cylinders
 - Lab benches and chairs/ stools
 - Centrifuge
 - Incubator/ Water baths/ Heating blocks
 - Electrophoresis equipment
 - Petri dishes and culture tubes
 - Microcentrifuge tubes of various sizes, Falcon tubes
 - Autoclave sterilizer
 - Balances, spatulas, weigh boats/ weigh paper
 - Burners

- o Spreaders and spreading loops
- o Hot plate/ stirrer with stir bars
- o Thermometers
- o Test tube racks, falcon tube racks, microcentrifuge tube racks
- o Fridge, -20 C freezer, preferably access to -80 C freezer (but not absolutely necessary)
- o Spectrophotometer
- o Incubator/ shaker
- DIY instruments are possible, but pipettes must be bought. Check out <http://diy-bio.com/diybio-lab-equipment/diy-centrifuge/> for instructions on DIY equipment
- DIY protocols can also be found online. (Example: transformation using calcium supplements)
- If lab space is found at your local university, there will be sufficient equipment already available and the DIY instruments would most likely not be as critical
- Second-hand equipment may also be available from your local university
- Chemicals, enzymes (restriction, ligase, etc.), buffers may need to be bought. Companies selling these may give discounts to academic institutions – see if you can contact your local university

Lab Space

- Previous iGEM teams have either worked in a lab at their high school or they obtained a lab space at their local University
 - o If you have found faculty members at the University who are willing to supervise/advise you contact them to help organize lab space on campus. Or you can contact specific departments at the university to see if they have available space
 - o If you don't have university faculty advising you or you live far away from a university, high school lab space would be the best option
- A space with lots of tables and chairs, such as a classroom, for dry lab work is also needed
- Lab Safety is important for the iGEM competition and must be strictly adhered to!
 - o iGEM has Lab safety rules that must be followed http://2018.igem.org/Safety/What_is_Safety
 - o Lab Safety forms must be submitted online to iGEM HQ throughout the summer (check calendar)
 - o If lab work is being conducted at a university, lab safety courses will need to be completed in compliance with the university's biosafety regulations.
 - o If lab work is being completed in a high school lab, lab safety will need to be followed in compliance with your regional high school science safety regulations

Things You'll Need (Collegiate)

iGEM's getting started advice: http://igem.org/Start_A_Team

Tips:

Always be on the lookout for iGEM Alumni or synthetic biologists (mentors) in your community that you can contact for mentorship, advice, or resources/contacts

When going to the administration, it is important to let them know what good is coming out of this and the uniqueness of this student-led research. With U of C it was easy because we had done iGEM in the past and had done well. For brand new teams with no track record at all, this may be more difficult

Start small (8-10 team members) and start as a club! Starting as a club is a good idea because there is documented finances, interview protocols, team administration, etc. and this makes continuation easier. It also makes recruitment easier. This helps establish the team as a long-term fixture at your school, not starting from new every year

Team

- 8- 15 team members per team
 - starting off, a smaller team is easier to manage and will cost less at the Jamboree
- Try to have a team that is as varied as possible with students with many different interests and skills (examples: wet lab skills, public engagement, wiki coding)
- Team name:
 - Must be less than 20 characters
 - Can contain A-Z, underscore, hyphen
 - Cannot contain spaces, “iGEM,” “team,” “synthetic biology,” or sponsors’ names

PIs/Instructors/Advisors

- Supervisors are responsible for some administrative work, supervising students in the lab and some team organizational details (examples: iGEM competition applications, safety forms, team fees). PIs (primary investigators) should attend the Jamboree and they must also be available for contact with iGEM HQ
- Instructors help students out day-to-day
- Advisors provide help, advice, mentorship
- As of 2018 teams need at least two PIs and one must be a faculty/staff member
- Graduate students/undergraduate students (especially those that have been previously involved with iGEM) may be willing to be advisors. Check out the University’s previous iGEM teams and start your search for student advisors there. They can help you, but the students of the team must complete most of the lab work.
- Later on, after the club is established, going to senior administrations would help to secure funding and they can delegate supervision or PIs

Administrative

- Requirements change every year, check out full requirements for the year at → http://2018.igem.org/Competition/Team_Requirements (Put respective year instead of 2018)

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- Competition Applications → iGEM registration handbook; <http://2018.igem.org/Competition/Registration/Handbook>
 - Every team member must create an igem.org user account (PIs, instructors, advisors, students, and anyone else on the team). When applying you will need to include the school you are affiliated with, NOT the team name that was created by the PI during team application, but the name of the actual school → http://igem.org/Account_Apply
 - Team PI must apply for and register the team → http://igem.org/New_Team
- Team roster:
 - Team members can receive a registration code from PIs and use this to add themselves to the team → http://igem.org/Join_Team
 - Team members can join an existing team by searching up the team name (PIs will have to accept their application to join the team) → http://igem.org/Join_Team
 - PIS can manually input names on the Team Information Page → http://igem.org/Team_List.cgi?year=2018
- Flights and accommodations should also be booked well in advance to the competition date. If travel is international, ensure months before the competition that all students have valid passports

Finances

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 - Late registration: \$5000 USD (early May; credit card, cheque, or wire transfer)
 - Jamboree attendance: \$695 USD per team member
- Equipment and chemical costs
- Available resources and funding:
 - Stable funding/baseline funding would be ideal for long-term iGEM teams. To do this, becoming affiliated with the University and don’t just be a club. Also, going to senior administrations would help to secure funding and they can delegate supervision or PIs
 - Smaller teams can get by with less funding from the university and can rely more on other grants. Once you have a track record established as a club you can approach the University for more funding and you’ll be more likely to get it
- Travel fees: Flights and accommodations for at least 4 nights in Boston
- Create a bank account for the team and keep track of finances

Lab Space

- Contact deans, department heads, or other administrative groups at your university to get help obtaining an open lab space for your team’s use.
- A space with lots of tables and chairs, such as a classroom, for dry lab work is also needed

- Lab Safety is important for the iGEM competition and must be strictly adhered to!
 - iGEM has Lab safety rules that must be followed
http://2018.igem.org/Safety/What_is_Safety
 - Lab Safety forms must be submitted online to iGEM HQ throughout the summer (check calendar)
 - Lab safety courses will need to be completed in compliance with school/university, local, and/or national biosafety regulations

Equipment

- Chemicals, enzymes (restriction, ligase, etc.), buffers
- Common instruments/ equipment needed for synthetic biology:
 - Pipettes (large serological and small, adjustable pipettes ranging in size from <1 uL - 1 mL)
 - Beakers and flasks in all shapes in sizes
 - Graduated cylinders
 - Lab benches and chairs/ stools
 - Centrifuge
 - Incubator/ Water baths/ Heating blocks
 - Electrophoresis equipment
 - Petri dishes and culture tubes
 - Microcentrifuge tubes of various sizes, Falcon tubes
 - Autoclave sterilizer
 - Balances, spatulas, weigh boats/ weigh paper
 - Burners
 - Spreaders and spreading loops
 - Hot plate/ stirrer with stir bars
 - Thermometers
 - Test tube racks, falcon tube racks, microcentrifuge tube racks
 - Fridge, -20 C freezer, preferably access to -80 C freezer (but not absolutely necessary)
 - Spectrophotometer
 - Incubator/ shaker
 - PCR Thermocycler

Interdisciplinary Recruitment

Arts:

- Abilities: Graphic design (logo...) wiki design
- Recruitment: Build their portfolio, “internship” practice

Medicine:

- Abilities: Wet-lab work, techniques
- Recruitment: research experience

Business:

- Abilities: Fundraising, Public Engagement
- Recruitment: Market research, bioengineering industry boom

Law:

- Abilities: lobbying, policies and practices, see where certain legislations are needed
- Recruitment: Real-world outreach

Engineering:

- Abilities: Dry-lab work, applied design, modelling
- Recruitment: widen horizons, get familiar with the newest fields of engineering, highlight the exponential growth of bioengineering, can count for full-time work experience (aka CV booster for internships)

Science:

- Abilities: Wet-lab work, modelling, wiki and coding stuff
- Recruitment: self-explanatory

Education:

- Abilities: Education and Public Engagement
- Recruitment: Communication, information delivery

General Recruitment Tips Regardless of Faculty:

- Research experience
- Internship experience
- Grad-school
- Real-world problem solving
- Have good public speakers that are charismatic do the presentation
- CV booster
- Networking opportunities
- Opportunity to travel to Boston, MA USA

General Skills to Look for Regardless of Faculty:

- Brings a special skill to the team (coding, graphic design, communication skill etc.)
- Punctual, hard-working, motivated, good work ethic, curiosity, passion for research/inquiry, interest in synthetic biology

General Tips for Success

1. Start early! Most successful teams start brainstorming project ideas well in advance of the summer. This allows for a comprehensive literature search phase and lots of time to iron out any issues in your project before you get into the lab.
2. Start the wiki as soon as you have a direction for your project and a general theme! This will save you a lot of anguish around wiki freeze time.
3. Fundraise right from the get-go. Fundraising actually takes a lot of effort and having a dedicated fundraising person may make more sense for your team. Make a clear budget before you start your project and attempt to fundraise for the duration of your project.
4. Pick a “themed” approach to your human practices efforts. A dedicated human practices team is also a good idea if you are interested in the “best integrated human practices” award.

5. Presentation Skills! Agree as a team what the style and substance of your presentation will be. Technical presentation tips are available online (find them and link some lmao).
6. Try contacting local media for publicity (which is good for crowdfunding) and to open up human practices or public outreach opportunities.

Grant Applications

Research - Look into grants available to you

- Look into internal and external grants available
- Check your eligibility for the grants
- Note down the deadlines of all the grants you are eligible to apply
- Ask your friends and mentors about grants they have applied to

Prepare - Contact referees and supervisors

- Save the deadline on calendar
- Plan out a timeline for the application
- Start early
- Look into the requirements of the application
- Prepare a summary of your research proposal for your supervisor which includes:
 - Objectives
 - Methods, Design
 - Possibly a project budget
 - Timeline for the project
- Prepare your CV/resume for the application
 - List experiences in order of relevance to the grant application
 - Be specific
- Contact your supervisor and send them details/requirements of the grant along with deadline(s) for the application
- If reference letters are required for the application then contact your referees early
- Let your referees know:
 - About the grant and why you think they would be a good referee
 - The deadline for the application

Writing the application

- Follow a timeline for completing the application
- Read sample successful grant applications
- Make a list of important points that have to be mentioned in the application
- If you have a lot of experience relevant to your project then go with quality over quantity
- Organize your points

- Start with a (very) rough draft that elaborates each of the points to be mentioned
- Describe how your experience will help you carry out your project and how the project will enhance your skills
- Talk about what skills you will gain from the project and how it will benefit you
- Be precise and to the point
- Read your first draft and edit it
- Look at areas that need improvement and rewrite them
- Always read the entire application then edit it
 - Editing paragraph by paragraph may lead you to forget important points that had to be mentioned
- Ask your P.I./supervisor to proofread it
- Ask people who read grant applications and whose applications have been accepted for their feedback
- Proofread your work and read your application out loud
- Check if you have met all the requirements of the application
- Double and triple check
- Hit submit. Good Luck!

Fundraising

Synthetic Biology Mythbusting in Your Community

NanoEthics: Studies of New and Emerging Technologies. Misconceptions of synthetic biology: Lessons from an interdisciplinary summer school.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303914263_Misconceptions_of_Synthetic_Biology_Lessons_from_an_Interdisciplinary_Summer_School

Synthetic Biology and Biosecurity: Challenging the “Myths”

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4139924/>

Public views on GMOs: deconstructing the myths

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1083956/>

Why is public opinion about synthetic biology important?

- Use of synthetic biology products by the general public
- Understanding of synthetic biology is important for policymaking
- Misconceptions by the public can impede the development of synbio tech

What is the current state of our understanding of synthetic biology?

Public/non-biologists understanding of synbio

- Lack of technical understanding
- Bias
- uncritical debates regarding synbio
- Many times synbio is associated with well-known public figures portrayed in the media
- Different understandings of “life” has varying meanings from person to person
- Different syntax that trigger different emotions than that used in science eg. GMO
- Overestimate the ability of scientists to manipulate life
- GMOs are generalized and not discussed as per a certain gene modification but was under an umbrella term
- Opposition to GMO, especially for agriculture
- Many perceive GMO as unnatural.

Synthetic Biologists

- Too focused with bench-side work to move synthetic biology toward the public
- Struggle with communicating with the public and not academic peers

How to engage community

- Presentations at community events
- Make it relatable to people (talk about things that general public is likely to encounter)
- Use simple language that general public will understand
- Hands on activities together with the presentation
- Encourage discussions/questions from the audience

Myth Busting

Myth 1: The public is ‘for’ or ‘against’ GMOs

Ambivalent attitude. Public Acceptance of Agricultural Biotechnologies (PABE) project found that participants (stakeholders in the GMO controversy: large food distributors, government departments and regulatory agencies, expert committees, scientists and their institutions, farmers’ union, environmental and consumer protection groups, NGOs.) Participants were aware of pros and cons of GMOs.

Myth 2: Anyone can create biological weapons

The connection between synthetic biology and DIYbio is overstated. People who are involved in sophisticated experiments are not amateur members of society.

*Myth 3: DNA is a way Nature uses to reproduce so DNA constructs can multiply and spread
DNA cannot amplify or replicate outside of the cell machinery*

Myth 4: Synthetic biology could be used to design radically new pathogens

*Lab experimental viruses usually accumulate mutations that attenuate the virus because of the passage through a series of host organisms (not subjected to any evolutionary pressures to maintain virulence). *Not a definite occurrence”*

Myth 5: GMO are harmful to the environment

Myth 6: Transgenic maize will contaminate and destroy land races.

Gene flow has occurred between maize and its progenitors, modern hybrids, and land races. This has not destroyed the land races.

Myth 7: Crops are natural and have not been modified by humans; plant breeding does not alter DNA

DNA has to be altered for crops to change appearance. DNA changes within the crop genome and leads to transgene insertion sites. Plants themselves can create novel genes that help them adapt to evolution and to human selection. Therefore, the DNA changes of natural crop is the same net result as genetically engineered plant genomes.

Marketing Your Project

Branding

- Branding is a way to communicate your team’s story and the story behind your chosen project

Team Branding

- Name
 - Already assigned – iGEM Calgary [insert year]
- Logo
 - Can use this template as general logo; simply change the date – [insert logo]
 - Or can create a new general logo
 - If so, create a template for it to be used by future teams

Project Branding

- Name
 - Choosing a name – create a list of words that relate to your project and try to connect these words together to form a project name that is both appealing and able to describe the project accurately
 - Do a Google search to ensure that your chosen name was not already used by previous iGEM teams; also do a Google search to ensure that this name is not already owned by another company

- Tagline(s)
 - Can include but not necessary
- Colours and logo
 - Choosing a colour scheme – determine how you want your wiki and poster to look; use this design to decide the colours you would like to use
 - Tip: a dark background will not show up well on the poster
 - Designing a logo – start by drawing out items that relate to your project and try to connect these items together to form a logo that provides a good description of your project

Social Media

- Banners and cover photos
 - Create an image to showcase your project; this can be used on the main pages of your social media to draw the public's attention
- Promotional material
 - Create material that excites the public about your project
 - These can include photos, videos, gifs, etc.
 - Ensure that the graphics you use are in line with your project's branding/design
 - If possible, try to create your own graphics to maintain consistency among the promotional material you distribute

Public Engagement

- Audiences with different cultures
- Audiences with various levels of understanding
 - Elementary School
 - Keep thing very simple
 - Explain things in broad terms
 - Keep things fun, you'll lose their attention
 - Junior High
 - ASK ALEX ABOUT TIPS
 - High School
 - ASK LALIT ABOUT TIPS
 - University Students
 -
 - Experts
 - Adults (General Public with varied Understanding)
- Audiences with a bias
 - Bias for Syn Bio
 - Bias against Syn Bio

- Audiences who can help with your project
- International audiences who can help with your project

Corporate Sponsorship

- Can use this template to appeal to corporate sponsors – [insert sponsorship package]
- Companies with a natural partnership that benefits them
 - Cold calling should be acceptable
 - Have a corporate sponsorship package
 - Create contacts
- Companies with a natural partnership may or may not benefit directly
 - If no contacts, cold calling may yield results
 - If contacts, pursue them
 - Create contacts
- Companies with contacts
 - Ask professors
 - Ask TAs
 - Ask teachers
 - Ask parents
 - Ask friends of parents
 - Ask friends
 - Ask yourself!
 - Connect with people, ask them if their company would be willing to help sponsor your team, if not ask them what you could do to give them more value & ask them if they have contacts that might be interested
- Companies without contacts and without a natural partnership (Cold Calling)
 - Submitting the donation forms for large corporations may not yield any results
 - Try to stick to companies that are somewhat related to Syn Bio
 - If you get a positive response, create that contact

[Wiki Tips](#)

- Start early
- Put one person in charge of programming the basic page template and then leading the wiki team. A computer science student would be super helpful with this.
- Have all your team graphics done by the same person (this can be the same person who does the programming or someone else). This ensures they are all done in the same style and there is a cohesiveness to the design.
- Try to make your graphics as vectors if possible. That way you can scale them to any size and not lose any detail.

Making templates:

- Create a new wiki page using:
2017.igem.org/Template:Team:TEAMNAME/PageTemplateName
- Add whatever HTML or CSS you desire.
- Include this template at the top of another page using
{{Team:TEAMNAME/PageTemplateName}}
- You can use templates to include CSS styling or other HTML elements common across all pages

TIP: Make your navigation bar as a template and include that template in all your basic pages. That way if you need to add a page or change a detail, you only change one file instead of having to do it on 20 different pages.

Design:

- Content is the most important: your wiki is telling your team's story. If the information isn't there, no amount of fancy gizmos and animations will make up for it
- Readability is key: use easy to read font and colours for body text and employ the use of margins, padding and line height. No one will notice a good design, but everyone will notice a bad one.
- Simple is probably better: the user should get to any piece of information within 3 clicks. Don't try to reinvent the wheel with super out of the box layouts if they detract from the actual content of your page.
- Use a grid layout to help with content hierarchy, and keep content locked to the grid.
- Keep it consistent! It looks funny if every page has a
- Interpret and summarize your data: use figures, graphs, and graphics to get your point across. Remember, your audience isn't exclusively academics.
- Check out some blog posts on good design: this includes understanding rule of thirds, complementary colours etc.

The actual coding:

If you've never done any coding before, don't worry. You'll catch on quick.

- Check out online resources like Free Code Camp and Code Academy to get an introduction to the main languages you will need: HTML, CSS and Javascript.
- Use Google and YouTube: A lot of the things you are trying to do probably have step by step youtube tutorials or blog posts that explain how it works.
- Make a CSS Template that includes all the styling for your wiki (the background colour, font face and colour, header colours etc.) This will help make everything consistent but also if you need to change something like the colour of your text, you're only changing one line of code.

To Bootstrap or not to Bootstrap:

What is it? Bootstrap is an open-source framework that combines HTML, CSS, and Javascript. It's a collection of tools to help make websites and includes code for everything from forms, navigation, graphs and other components. It has a great grid system which means it should be responsive across all screen sizes.

So should you use Bootstrap?

This is 100% up to you. If you've never programmed before, it may be easier to get your wiki set up because you won't have to start anything from scratch. It will also ensure that your design is responsive. The downside is that a lot of Bootstrap websites tend to look very similar and there is a lot of unnecessary code included. You may only end up using 5% or less of the built in functionality since the iGEM wikis really aren't all that complicated.

If you have a bit of experience programming you may want to try making your wiki from scratch. The world is your oyster in this case and you can really go crazy with originality. My first iGEM year I had never used HTML or CSS and went this route and still managed to make a great site. However, this does mean everything you do will have to be from scratch. Also, it won't be responsive by default so you will have to include some of that functionality manually. The upside is that if you are hoping to get a good grasp on HTML, CSS, and Javascript, this is the way to go. You will understand the language so much more in depth if you opt the non-Bootstrap way.

So which method is the least time consuming?

Depends. If you are already pretty familiar with HTML and CSS, Bootstrap will definitely be a lot faster as far as setting up a basic page. If this is your first time coding with these languages, you might spend just as much time trying to figure out how to use and customize Bootstrap to get what you want as if you did it from scratch.

In the end, it doesn't really matter. Both methods can produce beautiful and well organized and functional wikis.