

August 7, 2009

Dr. Randy L. Phelps
Staff Associate
Office of Integrative Activities
Major Research Instrumentation Program
National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22230

Dear Dr. Phelps:

The University of Arizona enthusiastically supports Steward Observatory's participation in the MRI-R2 proposal entitled "Development of the Atacama Sub-millimeter Telescope Robotic Observatory (ASTRO)" being submitted to the NSF by Oberlin College. ASTRO will provide a new, powerful tool for exploring large portions of the southern skies at submillimeter wavelengths and provide new insights into the star and planet formation process both in our galaxy and the nearby Universe. As part of the proposed effort Steward Observatory, under the direction of Professor Chris Walker, will play a leadership role in the design and construction of a large format, heterodyne array receiver to be used on ASTRO. The instrument's design will be based largely on SuperCam, an NSF funded, 64 pixel, heterodyne array receiver being built for the University's Heinrich Hertz Submillimeter Observatory (HHSMT). As part of our cost share commitment, observing time on the HHSMT will be allocated for conducting complementary observations in the northern sky, totaling \$84,629. Faculty academic year salary makes up the remaining part of the cost share commitment, totaling \$101,271. The ASTRO proposal effectively leverages on the expertise and infrastructure available at its partner institutions and will provide new capabilities that benefit the astronomy community as a whole. The project is a true team effort between all the faculty, researchers, and students involved. We look forward to a successful outcome.

Sincerely,



Leslie P. Tolbert, Ph.D.
Vice President for Research,
Graduate Studies and Economic Development

