

October 28, 2011

Interdisciplinary Peer-review Committee and
Banting Postdoctoral Fellowships Program Selection Board

Members of the Review Committee and Selection Board:

I am writing this letter to indicate the strong support of McGill University for the application submitted by Dr. Pat Scott for a Banting Postdoctoral Fellowship.

McGill places an extremely high priority on postdoctoral training. The University's 2006 strategic planning documents highlight strengthening of training programs and developing interdisciplinary areas of research as part of our objectives to enhance McGill as a research-intensive and student-centered university with the highest standards of achievement. We acknowledge the leading contribution made by postdoctoral fellows of Dr. Scott's calibre towards achieving these goals and our responsibility in providing them with the opportunities to achieve their full potential.

The university planning documents specify astrophysics as a priority research area for the future, and interdisciplinary science and emerging research areas as two of the university's key themes for enhancement. Dr. Scott's work cuts across astronomy, particle physics and theoretical physics in a highly interdisciplinary manner, so is exactly the interdisciplinary science the university wishes to promote. Dark matter research in particular is presently a very 'hot' emerging research area.

Dr. Scott is an exceptional candidate for the Banting Fellowship. He has repeatedly demonstrated an ability to produce outstanding research of international calibre, whilst at the same time making an invaluable contribution to the academic and professional environment of his host institution. Dr. Scott was selected by the university for recommendation for the Banting Fellowship through a two-stage competitive application process, at the departmental and institutional levels. Many other very strong candidates were not selected for university endorsement.

Dr. Scott's research is impressively aligned to the following major objectives of McGill's strategic research plan:

- Enhance key research themes and create new research opportunities with high impact on the national and international scene.
- Stimulate novel multidisciplinary research interactions across disciplines and institutions thus contributing to development of innovative research and academic programs.
- Strengthen internationally competitive research and scholarship in highly promising emerging areas.
- Augment investments in areas of strategic importance enhancing our ability to attract, retain, and develop outstanding faculty, students and research staff.

Dr. Scott's research is catalytic to cross-disciplinary interactions between the extremely strong groups in theoretical particle physics, experimental particle physics, and most recently, astrophysics. His research is both innovative and timely, coinciding well with the turn on of major particle accelerator facilities such as the Large Hadron Collider, and will no doubt boost McGill's already leading research role on the national and international stage. The Department of Physics at McGill sees Dr. Scott's application for the Banting Fellowship as a means by which to leverage this diverse expertise in a way that enhances all three research programs, and further strengthens the synergy between them.

Expansion of astroparticle physics at McGill is also a strategic reinforcement of the strong investment recently made in establishing the Astrophysics group (6 faculty hires in 2000-2006), as the cross-disciplinary nature of astroparticle activities will solidify and expand the Astronomy group's role in the Department of Physics as a whole. Dr. Scott's research program is itself also a highly strategic and cost-effective investment, as it will produce novel, very high-impact science by drawing together data from a multitude of experiments across the globe, *all of which are already funded*.

McGill's commitment to diversity, and specifically to gender equity, is clearly stated in our Employment Equity Policy and in the Handbook on Students' Rights and Responsibilities and is being advanced through our current Principal's Task Force on Diversity, Excellence and Community Engagement. At McGill, the Handbook officially applies to postdoctoral fellows. To ensure that McGill's commitment to gender equity has been honoured in the endorsement of candidates for the Banting Postdoctoral Fellowships, the Associate Provost (Policies, Procedures & Equity), has participated in the Institutional review of applications.

In conclusion, as Principal of McGill University, I join the Associate Provost (Graduate Education) and Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, the Dean of the Faculty of Science, and the Chair of the Department of Physics in strongly endorsing Dr. Scott's proposal. We view the Banting Postdoctoral Fellowship program as a partner with McGill in developing Dr. Scott's potential as a world class researcher and leader in the community.

Sincerely,

Professor Heather Munroe-Blum