

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

September 10th, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in strong support of the proposal from the Mozilla Foundation and Software Carpentry to develop workshop and online training materials, and to run workshops, in order to train young scientists to make more effective use of programming and existing software.

Here at MSU we have found that in a number of areas of biology study, scientists are ill-prepared to use already-available software and computational approaches. They are even less well-prepared to extend existing software to tackle new tasks. This lowers their overall productivity and limits the kind of science they can tackle. We are investing considerable effort in rather traditional areas of education (introductory coursework, etc.) but have found, not surprisingly, that this approach does not match the requirements of working research scientists very well.

We have already hosted several Software Carpentry-based workshops on our own dime, and are interested in doing so again in the future. One of the big missing components for these workshops is a really extensive set of online material and peer-to-peer learning approaches to make use of this material; the Software Carpentry material as it is today is a great start but not yet mature enough to address the wide-ranging needs apparent in research today.

We are interested in participating in all aspects of this proposal, including continuing to host bootcamp-style workshops here at MSU; sending interested students to more advanced workshops; participating in online peer-to-peer experiences; and helping to contribute material. We have several avenues for providing institutional recognition for such activities as well.

Sincerely,



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