Mr. Josh Greenberg
Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
630 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2550
New York, NY 10111

Dear Mr. Greenberg:

I am writing in support of the proposal by the Mozilla Foundation and Software Carpentry to improve the training of scientists in relation to computer programming and the web. Given the central nature of computational research and the internet to modern science it is critical that current and future scientists receive the necessary training to use these tools effectively. Proper training makes scientists more productive as individuals, more capable of working in teams with both other scientists and professional programmers, and allows them to do things like work with "big data" and utilize large cyberinfrastructure projects that they would be unable to explore without this foundational knowledge.

Software Carpentry is already having a major impact on the way that scientists work with computers. Taking the course completely transformed the way that I approach computation. I have every member of my research group participate in a Software Carpentry workshop or course during their first year and it allows us to write better code, that we have greater confidence in, in less time. The skills taught by Software Carpentry are the single most important thing learned by my students during graduate school, and my experience teaching these skills to others suggests that this applies to the majority of students who participate in these activities.

The proposal demonstrates a clear understanding of the challenges inherent in teaching good computational practice to scientists, and the proposed activities provide a major advance by building on the already strong foundations of Software Carpentry. Given Mozilla's established leadership in teaching web making and Software Carpentry's established record for training scientific programmers, I have every confidence that the outcomes of the proposed activities will have a major impact on the scientific enterprise.

I agree to continue to collaborate with Software Carpentry by hosting two-day bootcamps at Utah State University, providing instruction at other locations, and helping to develop the next generation of Software Carpentry material.

I believe that supporting Mozilla and Software Carpentry in these efforts is one of the single most important things that can be done to generally improve the practice of science in the modern era. I look forward to helping them accomplish their goals.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ethan P. White
Associate Professor
Department of Biology & The Ecology Center
Utah State University