MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

August 1, 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in strong and enthusiastic support of Dr. Greg Wilson and Mozilla's proposal to the Sloan Foundation to continue expanding the Software Carpentry material and giving courses. The bottom line is that Software Carpentry is incredibly important for the future of science, and despite many teaching successes we have been unable to identify a clear funding channel for it. Software Carpentry has directly led to productivity improvements and an increase in computational "community" here at MSU, and we plan to continue teaching these workshops.

As a professor of Biology and Computer Science at Michigan State University, I can attest at first hand to the dismal state of computational training at our universities. It is simply not a priority for the older faculty, and hence is not included in any curricula; this means that the majority of our students go untaught. Software Carpentry fills this education gap by providing online materials and short, focused workshops that enable students to learn the incredibly important art of effective computer use on their own and with the help of local and imported faculty.

In his proposal, Dr. Wilson is proposing to expand the population of educators, and he is also planning to coordinate the extension of the Web site into new topics and broader areas. It is my hope and belief that this will enable the expansion of the Software Carpentry curriculum and material into a single point of contact for starting to learn computational skills for scientists.

I am committed to the future expansion of Software Carpentry into a core component of graduate science education. In particular, we are introducing it at the introductory level of our BEACON Center for the Study of Evolution in Action; proposing Software Carpentry material as the basis for computational Responsible Conduct of Research

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

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training; and working with the NSF BIO directorate to expand Software Carpentry educational efforts into a cross-Center initiative. However, these are all embryonic efforts that are incapable of supporting substantial extension of the existing materials, which is one reason why Sloan funding is so important.

We have also been developing an NSF training grant for Big Data analysis in Microbial Ecology, and as part of the letters of support have learned that many companies in biotech and industry see the same lack of computational science skills that we see in research. This is truly a societal level challenge.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions, comments, or concerns.

Sincerely,

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