



Cover Page for Proposal  
Submitted to the  
National Aeronautics and  
Space Administration

NASA Proposal Number

TBD on Submit

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**SECTION I - Proposal Information**

Principal Investigator <b>Jason Wright</b>	E-mail Address <b>jtwright@astro.psu.edu</b>	Phone Number <b>814-863-8470</b>	
Street Address (1) <b>525 Davey Laboratory</b>	Street Address (2)		
City <b>University Park</b>	State / Province <b>PA</b>	Postal Code <b>16802</b>	Country Code <b>US</b>

Proposal Title : **Finding the Lowest Mass Exoplanet with Improved Radial Velocimetry**

Proposed Start Date  
**09 / 01 / 2014**

Proposed End Date  
**08 / 31 / 2015**

Total Budget  
**No budget required**

**SECTION II - Application Information**

NASA Program Announcement Number <b>NESSF14</b>	NASA Program Announcement Title <b>NASA Earth and Space Science Fellowship 2014</b>		
For Consideration By NASA Organization ( <i>the soliciting organization, or the organization to which an unsolicited proposal is submitted</i> ) <b>NASA , Headquarters , Science Mission Directorate , Earth Science</b>			
Date Submitted	Submission Method <b>Electronic Submission Only</b>	Grants.gov Application Identifier	Applicant Proposal Identifier <b>OSP171959</b>
Type of Application <b>New</b>	Predecessor Award Number	Other Federal Agencies to Which Proposal Has Been Submitted	
International Participation <b>No</b>	Type of International Participation		

**SECTION III - Submitting Organization Information**

DUNS Number <b>003403953</b>	CAGE Code <b>7A720</b>	Employer Identification Number (EIN or TIN) <b>246000376</b>	Organization Type <b>8H</b>
Organization Name (Standard/Legal Name) <b>Pennsylvania State University</b>			Company Division
Organization DBA Name <b>PENN STATE</b>			Division Number
Street Address (1) <b>201 OLD MAIN</b>		Street Address (2)	

City <b>UNIVERSITY PARK</b>	State / Province <b>PA</b>	Postal Code <b>16802-1505</b>	Country Code <b>USA</b>
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**SECTION IV - Proposal Point of Contact Information**

Name <b>Jason Wright</b>	Email Address <b>jtwright@astro.psu.edu</b>	Phone Number <b>814-863-8470</b>
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**SECTION V - Certification and Authorization**

**Certification of Compliance with Applicable Executive Orders and U.S. Code**

By submitting the proposal identified in the Cover Sheet/Proposal Summary in response to this Research Announcement, the Authorizing Official of the proposing organization (or the individual proposer if there is no proposing organization) as identified below:

- certifies that the statements made in this proposal are true and complete to the best of his/her knowledge;
- agrees to accept the obligations to comply with NASA award terms and conditions if an award is made as a result of this proposal; and
- confirms compliance with all provisions, rules, and stipulations set forth in this solicitation.

Willful provision of false information in this proposal and/or its supporting documents, or in reports required under an ensuing award, is a criminal offense (U.S. Code, Title 18, Section 1001).

Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) Name	AOR E-mail Address	Phone Number
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**AOR Signature** (*Must have AOR's original signature. Do not sign "for" AOR.*)

**Date**

PI Name : <b>Jason Wright</b>		NASA Proposal Number <b>TBD on Submit</b>	
Organization Name : <b>Pennsylvania State University</b>			
Proposal Title : <b>Finding the Lowest Mass Exoplanet with Improved Radial Velocimetry</b>			
<b>SECTION VI - Team Members</b>			
Team Member Role <b>PI</b>	Team Member Name <b>Jason Wright</b>	Contact Phone <b>814-863-8470</b>	E-mail Address <b>jtwright@astro.psu.edu</b>
Organization/Business Relationship <b>Pennsylvania State University</b>		Cage Code <b>7A720</b>	DUNS# <b>003403953</b>
International Participation <b>No</b>	U.S. Government Agency		Total Funds Requested <b>0.00</b>
Team Member Role <b>Graduate/Undergraduate Student</b>	Team Member Name <b>Sharon Xuesong Wang</b>	Contact Phone <b>814-321-7236</b>	E-mail Address <b>xxw131@astro.psu.edu</b>
Organization/Business Relationship <b>Pennsylvania State University</b>		Cage Code <b>7A720</b>	DUNS# <b>003403953</b>
International Participation <b>No</b>	U.S. Government Agency		Total Funds Requested <b>0.00</b>

PI Name : <b>Jason Wright</b>	NASA Proposal Number <b>TBD on Submit</b>
Organization Name : <b>Pennsylvania State University</b>	
Proposal Title : Finding the Lowest Mass Exoplanet with Improved Radial Velocimetry	
<b>SECTION VII - Project Summary</b>	
<p>The great synergy between NASA's Kepler mission and the ground-based radial velocity (RV) surveys has made ground-breaking discoveries of exoplanets, including many interesting low-mass and likely rocky planets such as Kepler-78b, the first exoplanet known to have radius and mass very close to Earth's. However, the current precision of radial velocimetry (<math>\sim</math>0.5–1 m/s) is limiting our ability to detect exoplanets with even lower masses or rocky planets further out in the orbit, especially in or near the Habitable Zone. We propose to improve the RV precision of several leading RV instruments (all using the iodine radial velocimetry), with the aim to find the lowest mass exoplanets.</p> <p>Our work will eliminate <math>&gt; 1</math> m/s from the RV systematic errors and improve the precision of these instruments to a new level: (1) Keck and the Hobby-Eberly Telescope (HET), which are the two leading facilities for extensive Kepler follow-up and independent RV surveys; CHIRON and the upcoming MINERVA, which are designed to carry out high-cadence RV surveys on an interesting sample of nearby stars such as tau Ceti and alpha Centauri. We will also revisit and perform dynamic analysis on systems with multiple planets, especially the ones with small RV amplitudes, such as tau Ceti, GJ 876, upsilon Andromedae, and GJ 581.</p> <p>We have identified several contributing factors to RV systematic errors through our pilot study, some of which are being recognized and studied in detail for the very first time for precise radial velocimetry with iodine. We will determine the first comprehensive error budget of iodine radial velocimetry through: removal of RV systematic errors / annual jitter caused by the Earth's atmospheric absorption (telluric lines); improvements in wavelength-dependent statistical weighting in spectrum for RV extraction; validation of the RV calibrator, the iodine atlas, using high-resolution echelle spectrograph; and improvements in data reduction and instrumental effect modeling for fiber-fed RV instruments.</p> <p>Our work is closely related to NASA's scientific objectives (quotes are the objectives of the solicitation): Precise radial velocimetry aims at searching "for planets and planetary systems about nearby stars in our Galaxy", and our work is directly related to determining "the percentage of planets that are in or near the Habitable Zone of a wide variety of stars and to measure their orbits" since improved RV precision will yield more detection of Earth- and super-Earth-like exoplanets. Our work will help to "determine the properties of those stars that harbor planetary systems" through the high-resolution spectra taken during RV observations and also through a better understanding of stellar RV signals thanks to a lower RV systematic errors. We directly support the Kepler mission, and in the future, TESS, through follow-up programs.</p>	

PI Name : <b>Jason Wright</b>	NASA Proposal Number <b>TBD on Submit</b>			
Organization Name : <b>Pennsylvania State University</b>				
Proposal Title : <b>Finding the Lowest Mass Exoplanet with Improved Radial Velocimetry</b>				
<b>SECTION VIII - Other Project Information</b>				
<b>Proprietary Information</b>				
Is proprietary/privileged information included in this application?				
<b>Yes</b>				
<b>International Collaboration</b>				
Does this project involve activities outside the U.S. or partnership with International Collaborators?				
<b>No</b>				
Principal Investigator <b>No</b>	Co-Investigator <b>No</b>	Collaborator <b>No</b>	Equipment <b>No</b>	Facilities <b>No</b>
Explanation :				
<b>NASA Civil Servant Project Personnel</b>				
Are NASA civil servant personnel participating as team members on this project (include funded and unfunded)?				
<b>No</b>				
Fiscal Year	Fiscal Year	Fiscal Year	Fiscal Year	Fiscal Year
Number of FTEs	Number of FTEs	Number of FTEs	Number of FTEs	Number of FTEs

PI Name : <b>Jason Wright</b>	NASA Proposal Number <b>TBD on Submit</b>
Organization Name : <b>Pennsylvania State University</b>	
Proposal Title : <b>Finding the Lowest Mass Exoplanet with Improved Radial Velocimetry</b>	
<b>SECTION VIII - Other Project Information</b>	
<b>Environmental Impact</b>	
Does this project have an actual or potential impact on the environment? <b>No</b>	Has an exemption been authorized or an environmental assessment (EA) or an environmental impact statement (EIS) been performed? <b>No</b>
Environmental Impact Explanation:	
Exemption/EA/EIS Explanation:	

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<b>SECTION VIII - Other Project Information</b>	
<b>Historical Site/Object Impact</b>	
Does this project have the potential to affect historic, archeological, or traditional cultural sites (such as Native American burial or ceremonial grounds) or historic objects (such as an historic aircraft or spacecraft)?	
<b>No</b>	
Explanation:	

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Organization Name : <b>Pennsylvania State University</b>	
Proposal Title : <b>Finding the Lowest Mass Exoplanet with Improved Radial Velocimetry</b>	
<b>SECTION IX - Program Specific Data</b>	
<b>Question 1 : Proposal Short Title</b>	
<b>Answer:</b> Finding Lowest Mass Exoplanet through Improved RV	
<b>Question 2 : Scientific Areas of Support</b>	
<b>Answer:</b> Astrophysics Research - (If you select this area, proceed to Question 4)	
<b>Question 3 : Earth Science Focus Areas</b>	
<b>Answers :</b>	
<b>Question 4 : Are you a U.S. citizen?</b>	
<b>Answer:</b> No	
<b>Question 5 : What is your citizenship?</b>	
<b>Answer:</b> China	
<b>Question 6 : Gender</b>	
<b>Answer:</b> Female	
<b>Question 7 : Are you an individual with disabilities?</b>	
<b>Answer:</b> No	
<b>Question 8 : Race/Ethnicity:</b>	
<b>Answers :</b>	
Asian	
<b>Question 9 : Birth State:</b>	
<b>Answer:</b> Inner Mongolia Province	

**Question 10 : Birth Country:**

**Answer:** China

**Question 11 : Degree Program:**

**Answer:** Ph.D.

**Question 12 : Undergraduate GPA/Field of Study:**

**Answer:** 82/100

**Question 13 : Graduate GPA/Field of Study:**

**Answer:** 3.9/4.0

**Question 14 : Student Stipend:**

**Answer:**

**Sharon Xuesong Wang - Graduate Student Fellow Student Stipend - \$24,000**

**Question 15 : Student Allowance:**

**Answer:**

**Health Insurance - \$2,130 Travel to conferences and/or publication charges - \$128**

**Question 16 : University Allowance:**

**Answer:**

**Tuition - \$3,742**

**Question 17 : Total Requested (maximum of \$30,000)**

**Answer:**

**\$30,000**

PI Name : <b>Jason Wright</b>	NASA Proposal Number
Organization Name : <b>Pennsylvania State University</b>	<b>TBD on Submit</b>
Proposal Title : <b>Finding the Lowest Mass Exoplanet with Improved Radial Velocimetry</b>	
<b>SECTION X - Budget</b>	
<b>Total Budget:</b> No budget required	

# Finding the Lowest Mass Exoplanets with Improved Radial Velocimetry

Sharon Xuesong Wang

## 1 Overview

The great synergy between NASA’s *Kepler* mission and the ground-based radial velocity (RV) surveys has made ground-breaking discoveries of exoplanets, including many interesting low-mass (Marcy et al. 2014) and likely rocky planets (Weiss & Marcy 2013) such as Kepler-78b, the first exoplanet known to have radius and mass very close to Earth’s (Howard et al. 2013; Pepe et al. 2013). In the post-Kepler era, radial velocimetry will continue to play a key role in validating Kepler candidates and measuring their masses, as well as discovering exoplanets independently.

However, the current precision of radial velocimetry ( $\gtrsim 0.5\text{--}1 \text{ m/s}^1$ ) is limiting our ability to detect exoplanets with even lower masses or rocky planets further out in the orbit, especially in or near the Habitable Zone. Breaking this limit is critical for enriching the diversity of the exoplanet ensemble towards the lower mass end, and it is a necessary step towards finding Earth-mass exoplanets in the Habitable Zone around Sun-like stars, which requires an RV precision of  $\sim 0.1 \text{ m/s}$ .

We propose to improve the RV precision of several leading RV instruments by eliminating  $> 1 \text{ m/s}$  of systematic errors, with the aim to find the lowest mass exoplanets. We will improve the RV precision of two 10-meter-class telescopes: Keck and the Hobby-Eberly Telescope (HET). With their large collecting areas, Keck and HET are the leading facilities for extensive *Kepler* follow-up observations as well as independent large and deep RV surveys. Our work will also improve the RV precision of two instruments on small telescopes: CHIRON and the upcoming MINiature Exoplanet RV Array (MINERVA). Designed for carrying out dedicated surveys with extremely high RV precision, CHIRON and MINERVA will provide valuable high cadence data on nearby and bright stars, which are the best targets for planetary atmosphere characterization studies.

## 2 Expected Scientific Outcome and Impact

**Science with Keck/HIRES:** The primary instrument we work with is the High Resolution Echelle Spectrometer (HIRES) on Keck I (current RV precision  $\sim 1 \text{ m/s}$ ). Among the 432 RV discovered exoplanets, Keck/HIRES has contributed the most ( $\sim 200$ ). It has also contributed to a great number of mass measurements of confirmed *Kepler* planets — in particular, *most* of the low mass ones (e.g., Gautier et al. 2012; Gilliland et al. 2013; Howard et al. 2013; Marcy et al. 2014). However, its current RV precision is limiting its ability to detect even lower mass planets or planets with the same mass but further out in orbit (see, e.g., the marginal or null detections of the confirmed *Kepler* planets in Marcy et al. 2014).

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<sup>1</sup>The photon-limited precision of the leading RV instruments (HARPS and Keck) is  $\sim 0.5\text{--}1 \text{ m/s}$  for bright stars, while in reality, there is almost always some extra error, i.e. the “RV jitter”, comprised of systematic errors and unaccounted stellar-activity signals. For example, the RMS of RV residuals against best-fit model for the Kepler-78b system is  $\sim 2.5 \text{ m/s}$ , with an RV jitter of  $\sim 2.1 \text{ m/s}$ , while the photon-limited error for the star is  $< 2 \text{ m/s}$  (Howard et al. 2013; Pepe et al. 2013).

Our work will improve the RV precision of Keck/HIRES, and thus extend the lower mass limit of the current exoplanet sample. This is especially promising when considering the large pool of low mass planet candidates that *Kepler* provides: among the  $\sim$ 1600 KOIs with transit signals suggesting a planet radius  $< 2$  Earth radii, there are  $\sim$ 260 whose host stars have *Kepler* magnitude  $< 13$  — bright enough for Keck to follow up (vs. fewer than 10 such targets with *Kepler* mag  $< 9$  and thus accessible to HARPS-N; [exoplanets.org](http://exoplanets.org)).

Meanwhile, better RV precision will improve the characterization of multiple-planet systems, especially the ones that host challenging low RV amplitude planets/candidates and with potentially very active dynamic interactions. Such systems are valuable samples for studying the architecture of exoplanet systems and planet formation. We will reanalyze the RV data and perform dynamic analyses on several of these systems, including the GJ 876 system, which is the closest multi-planet systems to the Sun and the only known exoplanet system with a triple conjunction (Marcy et al. 2001; Rivera et al. 2005, 2010); the  $\nu$  Andromedae system, the first multi-planet system discovered around main-sequence star (Butler et al. 1999; Wright et al. 2009; Curiel et al. 2011); as well as the GJ 581 system, which hosts the first claimed terrestrial-mass exoplanet in the Habitable Zone (Vogt et al. 2010, though it is under debate, e.g. Gregory 2011; Vogt et al. 2012; Robertson et al. 2013).

**Science with HET/HRS:** We will also improve the RV precision of the High Resolution Spectrograph (HRS) on HET (current RV precision  $\sim$ 3–5 m/s). With multiple ongoing upgrades on HET/HRS (expected to finish in Summer 2014), its throughput will be improved by a factor of  $\sim$ 5, also with the promise of higher RV precision of the new HRS. HET will become the second telescope, besides Keck, capable of extensive RV follow-up on planet candidates discovered by *Kepler*. This will also benefit other planet search programs on HET/HRS such as surveys on long-period planets and multiple-planet systems.

**MINERVA and CHIRON:** The upcoming MINERVA will consist of an array of four 0.7m telescopes and a vacuum-sealed, highly-stable spectrograph (schedule to be online in 2015). It will perform dedicated RV monitoring on a carefully-selected ensemble of nearby stars. It is expected to discover  $\gtrsim 10$  Earth- to super-Earth-size planets with orbital period of 1–100 days around nearby stars, with 3–5 expected to be in the Habitable Zones of their host stars (Bottom et al. 2013; Hogstrom et al. 2013). Our work will prepare MINERVA to meet its targeted long-term RV precision of  $\sim 0.8$  m/s.

CHIRON (on the 1.5m SMARTS telescope at CTIO) has demonstrated short-term RV stability of  $\sim 0.5$  m/s on  $\tau$  Ceti (Tokovinin et al. 2013). The improvement we propose will help CHIRON achieve long-term RV stability below 1 m/s and help validate or characterize the potential planetary systems around  $\tau$  Ceti (Tuomi et al. 2013) and  $\alpha$  Centauri B (Dumusque et al. 2012; Hatzes 2013), whose planets (candidates) have RV amplitudes on the order of  $\sim 1$  m/s or even smaller.

### 3 Methodology

We have identified several underlying causes for RV systematic errors through our pilot study. Some of these errors are being recognized and studied in detail *for the very first time*. A few of them enter the RV error budget at a  $\sim 1$  m/s or even larger level, and thus they set the floor for long-term RV precision at 1 m/s if not carefully studied and corrected for. We will determine the first comprehensive error budget of iodine radial velocimetry by:

### 3.1 Removing the Systematics Caused by Telluric Lines

In precise iodine radial velocimetry, RVs are measured from the differential shift of stellar lines between two stellar spectra. Since all current RV instruments are ground-based, the stellar spectra inevitably contain telluric absorption lines as from the light's travel through Earth's atmosphere. These telluric lines impersonate stellar lines but do not exhibit Doppler shifts caused by the Earth's barycentric motion ( $\sim$ a few to tens of km/s) and the exoplanets. The resulting “peak-pulling” effect in the iodine analysis (see, e.g. Wright et al. 2013) then manifests as an annual systematic signal.

For years, such problems caused by telluric lines were thought to have been suppressed to a negligible level, because there are only few telluric bands mostly with shallow lines within the working wavelength region of iodine radial velocimetry (5000Å–6000Å). However, as the RV precision improved over time and has approached  $\sim$  1 m/s and better, the adverse effects of telluric lines have emerged and become one of the current bottlenecks of precise radial velocimetry. **This is demonstrated *for the first time* through our preliminary study, and with some initial effort in telluric line masking, we were able to eliminate a visible amount of the systematic RV errors**, which is illustrated in Figure 1.

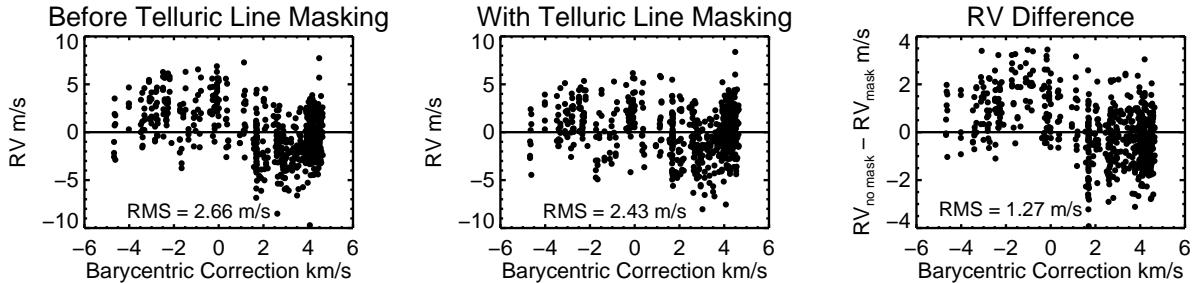


Figure 1: Measured precise radial velocities of a standard star observed with Keck/HIRES as a function of barycentric correction (i.e. Earth's radial velocity away from the target). Our preliminary treatment of telluric lines has removed over 1 m/s systematic noise (panel 3; note the change in scale on y-axis).

Figure 1 shows that the long-term ( $> 5$  years) RV RMS of an RV standard star observed by Keck/HIRES, HD 185144 ( $\sigma$  Draconis), is reduced from 2.66 m/s to 2.43 m/s — **an RMS of 1.08 m/s is removed from the RV jitter** ( $\sqrt{2.66^2 - 2.43^2}$ ). The last panel of Figure 1 illustrates the removed systematic errors, which has a clear annual signal. The rest of the RV jitter may be due to residual telluric line effects, intrinsic stellar jitter, other unknown systematic errors, or even low RV amplitude planets.

We will further reduce the systematics caused by telluric lines in several ways. For example, currently we are masking out the telluric lines by using a naive simulated telluric spectrum based on the elevation of Mauna Kea with nominal atmospheric compositions and conditions. In the future we will employ empirical masks derived from B star observations. Another example is that the RV extraction code is not yet optimized to consistently produce a good fit in regions where some of the pixels are being masked out due to telluric lines, especially for the cases with large barycentric velocity shifts. A more carefully-tuned  $\chi^2$  minimization algorithm will allow us to recover reliable RVs from *all* segments of the iodine-laced stellar spectrum, including those with significant telluric contamination.

This work will naturally improve the RV precision of HET/HRS and MINERVA, as they share essentially the same RV extraction code inherited from the Keck/HIRES pipeline. Moreover, the sites of HET/HRS and MINERVA are at much lower elevations than Mauna Kea, which means that the telluric line contamination probably causes more severe systematic errors. We will also work with the CHIRON team to implement the treatment for telluric lines to help CHIRON achieve higher long-term RV precision.

### 3.2 Improving the Wavelength-Dependent Statistical Weighting

The application of wavelength-dependent statistical weights is the “secret sauce” of precise iodine radial velocimetry. It evaluates the RV performance of each wavelength region (an “RV chunk”) across observations and assigns them statistical weights before computing the final mean RV. It also adjusts for the wavelength-dependent systematic offsets and rejects outlier chunks with poor RV RMS performance. Figure 2 illustrates the crucial role of this weighting scheme in precise radial velocimetry.

Through our preliminary work with telluric lines, we discovered that the weighting procedure does not give proper treatment to the telluric-contaminated chunks. It does not incorporate any prior knowledge on the intrinsic quality of chunks, and consequently, the telluric-contaminated ones tend to be either brutally rejected or taken in almost equally as the clean chunks.

**We propose to improve the statistical weighting by incorporating prior knowledge on the intrinsic quality of different wavelength regions.** Our work will extend beyond implementing proper treatment for the telluric regions: the current weighting procedure is purely a post-RV-reduction outlier rejection process, and we will increase its power by exploiting more prior knowledge on each chunk, such as the amount of Doppler information content, the signal-to-noise ratio, and instrumental effects.

### 3.3 Validating the Calibrator: the Iodine Atlas

A “ground truth” iodine atlas is crucial for the precise iodine radial velocimetry. It is used for modeling the observed iodine lines in the stellar+iodine RV observation to anchor the absolute wavelengths and the spectrograph response function. Such a “ground truth” atlas is normally obtained through a Fourier Transform Spectrometer (FTS). However, our recent work has revealed potential problems with the quality of FTS iodine atlases.

We took a new FTS atlas of the HET/HRS iodine cell at NIST and compared it with the old one (taken at KPNO in 1993), which showed that they differ significantly in terms of wavelength scales and line shapes. The RV jitter of the RV standard star HD 185144 (observed with HET/HRS) is  $\sim 5$  m/s when we use the new FTS atlas vs.  $\sim 4$  m/s with the old one. This calls into questions of how “true” any existing FTS iodine atlas really is, and demands for an independent method to validate them. **We propose to validate the quality of the FTS iodine atlases for the new HET/HRS and MINERVA, and also for CHIRON and other RV instruments if necessary.**

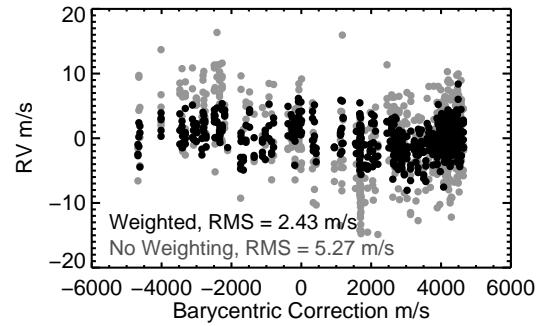


Figure 2: RV RMS of HD 185144 before (gray) and after (black) weighting.

We have found a method to independently validate the quality of FTS iodine atlas, which is to take a high-resolution echelle spectrum of the iodine cell in the “real wavelength space” (as opposed to in Fourier space with FTS). We used the TS12 arm of the Tull Spectrograph at the McDonald Observatory 2.7m telescope, which has the matching spectral resolution to an FTS ( $R \sim 500,000$ ). For our pilot study, we used the iodine cell at the McDonald 2.1m telescope, whose FTS atlas was also taken at KPNO in 1993 and thus can represent the quality of the KPNO FTS atlases.

Figure 3 illustrates the comparison between the FTS iodine atlas and the echelle spectrum (zoomed into a  $2\text{\AA}$  chunk). It shows that, when convolved down to resolution  $R = 60,000$  (typical resolution of an star+iodine RV observation), the difference between the KPNO scan and the echelle spectrum is consistent with photon-limited errors and potential errors in flat fielding and scattered light removal.

This demonstrates that we have found an independent and reliable method to validate any FTS iodine atlas. Current and upcoming RV instruments such as the new HET/HRS, MINERVA, and CHIRON will need validation for their FTS iodine atlases to eliminate one risk factor that could potentially compromise the RV precision, which is our proposed work here.

### 3.4 Improving Data Reduction and Instrument Modeling

We propose to improve the data reduction pipeline of HET/HRS in preparation for its upgrade (schedule to finish in Summer 2014) and also for the upcoming project MINERVA. The new HET/HRS will have a new spectral format that is similar to CHIRON and MINERVA. This new format will have five parallel images for each echelle order due to the implementation of an image slicer, and this poses a challenge to data reduction, especially for flat fielding. With our experience of setting up data reduction pipeline for the current HET/HRS (Wang et al. 2012) and our close collaboration with the CHIRON group, we will produce a pipeline for the new HET/HRS and MINERVA to ensure the delivery of high RV precision.

Another factor that is limiting the current precision of HET/HRS is the modeling of the spectrograph response function (SRF). This is probably not a dominant issue for Keck/HIRES, since the SRF of HIRES has been studied in detail and modeled successfully. However, for the fiber-fed HET/HRS and MINERVA, the SRF will be significantly different and require more careful study on fiber spectroscopy. We have acquired on-sky and engineering test data with HET/HRS designed to address this issue, as well as the issue of modal noise, which is also unique to fiber-fed spectrographs.

## 4 Relevance to NASA’s Objectives and Missions

Broadly, our investigation addresses one of the science objectives of NASA SMD, “Discover the origin, structure, evolution and destiny of the universe and search for Earth-like planets”.

More specifically, this proposal is directly and closely relevant to the Astrophysics Research Program, theme (iii) Exoplanet Exploration, in the solicitation: **(1) “to search for planets and planetary systems about nearby stars in our Galaxy”**: This is the direct science goal of our work. **(2) “to determine the properties of those stars that harbor planetary systems”**: We will acquire high resolution spectra on planet host stars with Keck/HIRES and HET/HRS for, e.g. the *Kepler* stars, as required by the RV technique. Improved RV precision will also help better understanding stellar activities and stellar RV jitter. **(3) “to determine the percentage of planets that are in or near the Habitable Zone of a wide variety of stars and to measure their orbits”**: Improved RV precision of Keck/HIRES and HET/HRS will enable more detections of potentially rocky exoplanets in the Habitable Zone of their host stars, which is also the immediate goal of project MINERVA.

Our work will support current and future NASA missions: We will enhance the scientific outcome of the ***Kepler* mission** through follow-up programs such as candidate validation, planetary mass measurements, and TTV target follow-up. In the future, Keck/HIRES, HET/HRS, and MINERVA can all contribute significantly to the follow-up programs of **TESS**. Improved radial velocimetry will find more super Earths and Earth analogs, which are the primary targets for **JWST** for planetary atmosphere characterization.

## References

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# **Project and Academic Program Schedule**

Applicant: Sharon Xuesong Wang

PI: Prof. Jason T. Wright

Penn State University

September 1, 2014      Proposed Start Date of Project

August 31, 2014      Proposed End Date of Project

August 2015      Expected Graduate Date of Applicant

Note: The applicant has already passed the qualification and candidacy exams and completed all required courses in the Ph.D. program. The proposed work is part of the applicant's doctoral thesis.

# JASON THOMAS WRIGHT —CV

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DOB: 2 August 1977

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#### **Positions Held**

Assistant Professor, Penn State University	Aug. 2009 – present
Research Associate, Cornell University	Dec. 2007 – Aug. 2009
Postdoctoral Researcher, UC Berkeley	2006-2007
Graduate Research Assistant, UC Berkeley	2000-2006

Education

# UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

PhD	Astrophysics	May 2006
	Thesis: <i>Stellar Magnetic Activity and the Detection of Exoplanets</i>	
	Adviser: Geoffrey W. Marcy	
MA	Astrophysics	May 2003

## BOSTON UNIVERSITY

BA      Astronomy and Physics (mathematics minor) *summa cum laude*      May 1999  
Thesis: *Probing the Magnetic Field of the Bok Globule B335*  
Adviser: Dan P. Clemens

## Research Areas

- Member, California Planet Survey Consortium
  - Precise Doppler radial velocity planet detection
  - Long-period exoplanet detection with HET/HRS
  - Multi-planet system characterization with Keck/HIRES
  - Characterizing the new benchmark Galactic cluster Ruprecht 147
  - Ages and activity levels of old field stars
  - Project MINERVA: finding the smallest planets around the nearest stars
  - The Exoplanet Orbit Database at [exoplanets.org](http://exoplanets.org)
  - Mid-infrared searches for extraterrestrial civilizations with large energy supplies
  - Formation of the Moon

## SHARON XUESONG WANG

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University Park, PA 16802

Phone: (814) 863-7948  
Email: xxw131@astro.psu.edu

## EDUCATION

<i>PhD Candidate, Astronomy &amp; Astrophysics, Penn State University</i>	since Aug 2008
<i>Bachelor of Science, Physics, Tsinghua University, Beijing, China</i>	Jun 2008
<i>Exchange Program, Physics, University of Adelaide, Australia</i>	Aug – Dec 2006

## PUBLICATIONS

The X-ray Properties of the Submillimeter Galaxies in the ALMA  
LABOCA E-CDF-S Submillimeter Survey  
**Sharon Xuesong Wang**, W. Niel Brandt, et al. 2013, *ApJ*, 778, 179

The Discovery of HD 37605c and A Null Detection of Transits of HD 37605b  
**Sharon Xuesong Wang**, Jason T. Wright, et al. 2012, *ApJ*, 761, 46

Tracking Down the Source Population Responsible  
for the Unresolved Cosmic 6-8 keV Background  
Yongquan Xue, **S. X. Wang**, et al. 2012, *ApJ*, 758, 129

MARVELS-1: A Face-on Double-lined Binary Star Masquerading as a Resonant Planetary System  
and Consideration of Rare False Positives in Radial Velocity Planet Searches  
Jason T. Wright, Arpita Roy, Suvrath Mahadevan, **Sharon X. Wang**, et al. 2013, *ApJ*, 770, 119

And 4 other co-authored peer-reviewed publications.

## AWARDS

*Downsborough Graduate Fellowship* May 2010  
Department of Astronomy & Astrophysics, Penn State University  
• Award for senior graduate student for outstanding scholarly achievement.

*Stephen B. Brumbach Fellowship in Astrophysics* May 2010  
Department of Astronomy & Astrophysics, Penn State University  
• In recognition of excellence in academic performance and research during the first two years.

*Zaccheus Daniel Fellowship* 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012  
Department of Astronomy & Astrophysics, Penn State University  
• Research and Travel Funding Award for current graduate student.

*Teaching Assistant of the Year Award* Jun 2009  
Department of Astronomy & Astrophysics, Penn State University  
• In recognition of outstanding teaching by a graduate student.



1855

Tuesday, November 12, 2013

**Dr. Jason T Wright****OFFICE**

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 U.S.A.

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To the NESSF Committee:

I am writing to recommend Sharon (Xuesong) Wang for the NASA Earth and Space Science Fellowship. I write as her thesis adviser, having supervised her research for multiple years, and as her instructor in my Stellar Atmospheres class. Sharon has proven her versatility and capacity for outstanding scholarship in her time at Penn State, and her thesis will be an important advance in exoplanetary astronomy. I have reviewed her proposal “Finding the Lowest Mass Exoplanet with Improved Radial Velocimetry” and give it my strongest endorsement.

Ms. Wang is improving the radial velocity precision of the Hobby-Eberly Telescope (HET) and the telescope at Keck Observatory for the purpose of detecting planets orbiting the nearest Sun-like stars. Of particular utility is using these telescopes to study the planetary systems the *Kepler* spacecraft is discovering with rocky planets in the “Habitable Zone”<sup>1</sup>. HET and Keck are the only two large (8–10 meter class) Northern Hemisphere telescopes capable of precise radial velocity measurements, which we use to discover and characterize the orbits of planets orbiting other stars. Sharon will also apply this expertise to the MINERVA project at Palomar mountain, which employs small (0.7-meter) telescopes to find planets orbiting the nearest stars, and will perform important *TESS* followup observations.

Ms. Wang has already spent over a year building a working precise Doppler pipeline for the HET. She adapted a standard software package to Hobby-Eberly Telescope High Resolution Spectrograph spectra, and successfully developed a turnkey system for High Resolution Spectrograph raw data from multiple configurations. Sharon also developed her own software to perform parameter estimation of radial velocity curves using a robust bootstrapping procedure that can handle data from multiple telescopes, multiple planets, and that can be used for transit time prediction. This code is currently the basis for a fruitful collaboration with multiple collaborators to find transiting planets orbiting the nearest stars. All of these efforts have culminated in a first author paper<sup>2</sup> for Sharon, recently published, announcing the discovery of a second planet orbiting the star hosting the first planet discovered with the HET.

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<sup>1</sup> The region around a star where an Earth-like planet or moon would have a surface temperature consistent with liquid surface water.

<sup>2</sup> <http://adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/2012ApJ...761...46W>

Ms. Wang has also successfully implemented the precise Doppler code of the California Planet Survey from the Keck and Lick planet searches to run at Penn State on HRS and Keck data, which required reading, learning, and often rewriting thousands of lines of (often poorly-documented) legacy IDL code. It was a Herculean effort, and now Sharon's code produces radial velocities that match the best published precision for HRS data, and matches the precision of the Keck Doppler pipeline on Keck/HIRES data.

Ms. Wang's current effort involves further improvements to the RV pipeline, most notably proper treatment of atmospheric (telluric) absorption features and a thorough error budget including the effects of fiber-optic modal noise and imperfect iodine template spectra. These efforts have improved the precision of the Keck pipeline, removing 1 m/s of systematic noise due to telluric features from one of our best standard stars. This development will certainly improve the ability of Keck to characterize low-mass planets, and points the way to improving the precision at HET as well, when it comes back online from its upgrades. We are eager to apply Sharon's new code to such low-amplitude Keck systems as GJ 581, tau Ceti, and 55 Cancri.

In sum, thanks to Sharon's continued efforts, HET/HRS and Keck are poised to play an even more critical role in NASA's continued followup of *Kepler* targets (and future followup of *TESS* targets) and in laying the groundwork for the next generation of planet detection and characterization missions.

Sharon is widely seen as a top graduate student in our program, and there is no doubt that her future as a leader in astronomy both professionally and scientifically is very bright.

We at Penn State know how lucky we are to have Sharon working with us for her graduate work, and she will make outstanding use of an NESSF fellowship.



Jason T Wright  
Assistant Professor of Astronomy

02/05/14  
1 PAGE

## GRADUATE TRANSCRIPT SENT TO:

XUESONG WANG  
525 DAVEY LAB

UNIVERSITY PARK, PA 16802

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
OFFICE OF THE UNIVERSITY REGISTRAR - UNIVERSITY PARK, PA 16802

LAST NAME	WANG
FIRST NAME	XUESONG
MIDDLE NAME	
ADMITTED FROM	TSINGHUA U
	B S 07/08

MAJOR	ADMIT DATE	FALL 08
ASTRO / PH D		

COURSE NO.	TITLE	CREDIT	GRADE	COURSE NO.	TITLE	CREDIT	GRADE
ASTRO 501	FALL SEM 2008	3.0	A	ASTRO 601	SPRING SEM 2013	0.0	
ASTRO 502	FUND ASTRO	3.0	A	ASTRO 601	PH D DIS FULL-TIME	0.0	
ASTRO 602	FUND ASTROPHYS	2.0	A	ASTRO 601	FALL SEM 2013	0.0	
ASTRO 590	SUPV EXP/COLL TCHG	1.0	A	ASTRO 601	PH D DIS FULL-TIME	0.0	
ASTRO 527	COLLOQUIUM	3.0	A				
	COMP PHYS & ASTROP						
ASTRO 585	SPRING SEM 2009						
ASTRO 534	TOPICS ASTRO AP	3.0	A				
ASTRO 602	STEL STRUC EVOL	3.0	A				
PHYS 562	SUPV EXP/COLL TCHG	1.0	A				
	QM II	3.0	A-				
	FALL SEM 2009						
PHYS 510	GR I	3.0	A				
ASTRO 589	SEM ASTRO RES	1.0	A				
ASTRO 542	ISM & STAR FORM	3.0	A				
ASTRO 596	INDIVIDUAL STUDIES	3.0	A-				
ASTRO 602	SUPV EXP/COLL TCHG	1.0	A				
	SPRING SEM 2010						
ASTRO 545	COSMOLOGY	3.0	A				
ASTRO 585	TOPICS ASTRO AP	3.0	A				
STAT 500	APPLIED STAT	3.0	A				
	FALL SEM 2010						
AERSP 424	ADV COMPUTER PROGR	3.0	A				
ASTRO 589	SEM ASTRO RES	1.0	A				
ASTRO 596	INDIVIDUAL STUDIES	6.0	A				
	SPRING SEM 2011						
STAT 440	COMP STAT	3.0	A				
ASTRO 601	PH D DIS FULL-TIME	0.0					
	FALL SEM 2011						
ASTRO 601	PH D DIS FULL-TIME	0.0					
	SPRING SEM 2012						
ASTRO 601	PH D DIS FULL-TIME	0.0					
	FALL SEM 2012						
ASTRO 589	SEM ASTRO RES	1.0	A				
ASTRO 601	PH D DIS FULL-TIME	0.0					

## SPECIAL ACTIONS AND NOTES

05-14-10 ADMIT DOCTORAL CAND PH D - ASTRO  
MINOR IN COMPUTATIONAL SCIENCE

01-21-11 COMPREHENSIVE EXAM PASSED

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on back of Official Transcript

TERM/SEM	MAJOR	CUMULATIVE			TOTAL CREDITS EARNED
		CREDIT	GRADE PTS	AVERAGE	
FALL 08	ASTRO	10.0	40.00	4.00	10.0
SPRING 09	ASTRO	19.0	75.01	3.95	19.0
FALL 09	ASTRO	29.0	114.02	3.93	29.0
SPRING 10	ASTRO	38.0	150.02	3.95	38.0
FALL 10	ASTRO	48.0	190.02	3.96	48.0
SPRING 11	ASTRO	51.0	202.02	3.96	51.0
FALL 11	ASTRO	51.0	202.02	3.96	51.0
SPRING 12	ASTRO	51.0	202.02	3.96	51.0
FALL 12	ASTRO	52.0	206.02	3.96	52.0
SPRING 13	ASTRO	52.0	206.02	3.96	52.0
FALL 13	ASTRO	52.0	206.02	3.96	52.0

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Rev. 7/04

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# TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY STUDENT RECORD (ENGLISH TRANSLATION)

Name	Wang Xuesong	Student Number	2004012174	Sex	Female
Date of Birth		Schooling	4 years	Degree Pursued	Bachelor
Date of Admission	August 18, 2004	Date of Graduation	July 2, 2008		
Department	Department of Physics				
Major	Physics				

Course Number	Course	Credits	Record	Exam Date
12090043	Military Theory and Skill Training	3	95	2004-09
00640762	College English Reading Writing and Translation(2)	2	88	2005-01
10420684	Linear Algebra and Analytic Geometry(1)	4	89	2005-01
10420874	Calculus	4	70	2005-01
10430754	General Physics(1)	4	81	2005-01
10440144	Chemical Principles	4	76	2005-01
10610022	Ideological and Moral Education	2	90	2005-01
10640612	English Listening/Speaking(2)	2	Pass	2005-01
10720011	Physical Culture(1)	1	67	2005-01
00640772	College English Reading Writing and Translation(3)	2	89	2005-06
00740043	C++ Programming	3	Excellence	2005-06
10420834	Linear Algebra(2)	4	88	2005-06
10420884	Multi-variable Calculus	4	86	2005-06
10430632	Lab. of Physics(1)	2	90	2005-06
10430764	General Physics(2)	4	79	2005-06
10610013	Introduction to Mao Zedong's Thought	3	85	2005-06
10720021	Physical Culture(2)	1	86	2005-06
40430291	Current Research Topics	1	Excellence	2005-09
10640852	English Summer Camp	2	Pass	2005-09
00780501	Appreciation of Visual Art	1	Pass	2006-01
10420894	Advanced Calculus	4	84	2006-01
10430642	Lab. of Physics(2)	2	83	2006-01
10430774	General Physics(3)	4	83	2006-01
10450052	General Biology B	2	77	2006-01
10450062	Experimental Guide of General Biology	2	92	2006-01
10610033	Principle of Marxist Political Economics	3	90	2006-01
10720031	Physical Culture(3)	1	69	2006-01
00630072	Appreciation of Ancient Chinese Prose and Essays	2	Pass	2006-06
10430824	Lab of Physics(3)	4	84	2006-06
10610043	A Survey of Deng Xiaoping's Theory	3	84	2006-06
10720041	Physical Culture(4)	1	85	2006-06
20220395	Electrical Engineering and Applied Electronics	5	75	2006-06
20430044	Classical Mechanics	4	77	2006-06
20430145	Functions of a complex Variable and Equations in Mathematical Physics	5	60	2006-06
00640262	English Writing	2	Pass	2007-01
10430713	Experiments in Modern Physics A	3	Pass	2007-01
21510082	Metal Working Technology Practice C	2	Pass	2007-01
22650022	Electronic Working Technology Practice	2	Pass	2007-01
10640764	English Level Test I	4	89	2007-04
00610832	I-go and Chinese Culture	2	Pass	2007-06
10430743	Experiments in Modern Physics D	3	96	2007-06
10720120	Physical Culture(2)	0	76	2007-06
20430054	Electrodynamics	4	89	2007-06
20430064	Quantum Mechanics	4	85	2007-06

Total Credits in All Academic Years 186.0

Academic Degree Bachelor of Science

Minor in \*\*\*\*\*

Academic Degree \*\*\*\*\*

Official Seal:

Date: July 1, 2008

# TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY STUDENT RECORD (ENGLISH TRANSLATION)

Name	Wang Xuesong	Student Number	2004012174	Sex	Female
Date of Birth		Schooling	4 years	Degree Pursued	Bachelor
Date of Admission	August 18, 2004	Date of Graduation	July 2, 2008		
Department	Department of Physics				
Major	Physics				

Course Number	Course	Credits	Record	Exam Date
20430084	Statistical Mechanics	4	67	2007-06
40430013	Astrophysics	3	81	2007-06
40430303	Seminar(1)	3	Pass	2007-06
40430185	Lab. Work	5	Pass	2007-09
00050071	Introduction to Sustainable Development	1	Pass	2007-11
Y0320032	Advanced MRI Techniques and Applications	2	92	2007-12
10720110	Physical Culture(1)	0	65	2008-01
10720130	Physical Culture(3)	0	64	2008-01
20430183	Statistical Mechanics(2)	3	77	2008-01
20430193	Quantum Mechanics (2)	3	77	2008-01
30430094	General Relativity	4	92	2008-01
40430323	Seminar(3)	3	Pass	2008-01
60640102	French (The Second Foreign Language)	2	Pass	2008-01
00611902	Study on Chinese Traditional Opera	2	88	2008-06
00612082	Introduction of Confucianism	2	90	2008-06
00781101	Appreciation and Analysis of Western Chamber Music	1	60	2008-06
00802762	History of World Art	2	86	2008-06
10610053	The Principle of Marxist Philosophy	3	89	2008-06
40430260	Diploma Project(Thesis)	15	91	2008-06
40430354	Solid Physics(1)	4	64	2008-06
80430173	Selected Topics in Astrophysical Frontiers	3	85	2008-06
*****	*****			

Total Credits in All Academic Years 186.0

Minor in \*\*\*\*\*

Academic Degree Bachelor of Science

Academic Degree \*\*\*\*\*



Official Seal: 成绩单专用章

Date: July 1, 2008



# THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE

AUSTRALIA

## OFFICIAL ACADEMIC TRANSCRIPT

Name: **Xuesong Wang**  
ID: **1151488**

Issued on 02-OCT-2007

### BEGINNING OF NON AWARD RECORD

#### ACADEMIC PROGRAM RECORD:

##### Exchange Program

Program  
Exchange  
Date: 06-APR-2006  
Date: 28-APR-2006  
Date: 28-APR-2006

Plan  
Exchange - Other  
Status: Application  
Status: Admit  
Status: Matriculation

Sub Plan  
Exchange - One Semester

#### ENROLMENT RECORD:

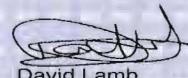
##### 2006 Academic Year

##### 2006 Semester 2

Subject Area	Catalogue Number	Description	Units	Mark	Grade
ENGL	1104	Professional English (ESL)	3.00	88	High Distinction
PHYSICS	2002	Classical Fields and Mathematical Methods II	2.00	99	High Distinction
PHYSICS	3002	Experimental Physics III	3.00	82	Distinction
PHYSICS	3006	Advanced Dynamics and Relativity	3.00	87	High Distinction
Total Units Attempted:			11.00		
Total Units Passed:			11.00		

### END OF NON AWARD RECORD

---END OF TRANSCRIPT---



David Lamb  
Director,  
Student Administrative Services