



January 21, 2008

Dr. Joan M. Frye
Office of Integrative Activities
National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22230

Dear Dr. Frye:

I am writing to provide the University of Richmond's commitment to the National Science Foundation-Major Research Instrumentation proposal, **"MRI: Acquisition of a Computing Cluster for Nuclear Physics and Astrophysics and Computer Science Research at the University of Richmond,"** being submitted by Drs. Gerard P. Gilfoyle and Emory F. Bunn in the Department of Physics, and Drs. Barry Lawson and Douglas c. Szajda in the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science.

Acquisition of this instrument is critical to the research activities of our faculty and to the research training of our students. This computing cluster will be housed in our Gottwald Center for the Sciences, a newly renovated and enhanced building with extensive new facilities for learning and research. The university is committed to the operation and maintenance of the computing cluster.

For more than eight years, I have worked very closely with the Physics Department and other science faculty, developing and implementing our Strategic Plan's Initiative for Scientific Discovery, the flagship initiative for our institution's renewed focus on student learning and research. Faculty members have diligently revised the curriculum in each program with an emphasis on experiential learning where students are challenged with hands-on and real-world applications. In this curriculum, students are encouraged to join research partnerships under the guidance of our faculty, allowing active engagement and leading to peer-reviewed presentation and publication. Up to date instrumentation is a vital component of this plan for both faculty and students.

As we begin to realize our aspiration of moving from the ranks of the very good science undergraduate programs to one of the very best, each enhancement in instrumentation affecting research takes us closer to our goals. Our facility and programmatic improvements through the Initiative for Scientific Discovery will enhance our students' learning process while on campus and will encourage our students to continue their scientific study beyond their four years at Richmond. At the same time we need partners, highly respected external agencies and foundations that are also committed to improving scientific research, study and education.

I thank you for the opportunity to be considered under the NSF-MRI program.

Sincerely,


Andrew F. Newcomb
Dean

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