

Faculty Grant for International Connections: Trip Report

A. Peet Hickman

Department of Physics, Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA 18015

This report summarizes the international travel and its benefits that were made possible by a Faculty Grant for International Connections awarded by Lehigh University. I flew to France on June 15, 2010 and spent two weeks at the Université de Montpellier II in Montpellier. During that time I worked closely with Dr. Dahbia Talbi of the Astronomy and Astrophysics group and Dr. Fabien Gatti of the Theoretical Chemistry Group. I have known Dr. Talbi for many years, but this trip provided my first opportunity to meet Dr. Gatti. We all had very productive discussions about the future direction of our collaboration.

All of us found the opportunity for face-to-face discussions very valuable. About a year ago, I began using in my research a computer program co-written by Dr. Gatti. The code is very powerful but sometimes not easy to use. It was not always effective to try to resolve questions about the code by email. When we both sat down in front of the computer, we were able to have a real dialog about the features of the code. Working together led to a much better understanding on my part of how to use the code, and Dr. Gatti got a much better grasp of the problems I am interested in.

The timing of the visit also enabled us to work together on a proposal to NASA. I had pulled together most of the proposal before leaving Bethlehem, and we had several days before the final version was to be submitted electronically. During the first few days of my visit, we were able to discuss and revise the proposal. We ended up with a much stronger document.

While in Montpellier, I was able to stay in an apartment building near the University that is dedicated to housing short-term foreign visitors. The facilities were excellent; Lehigh would benefit greatly if it had something similar. My apartment included a kitchenette, basic furnishings, and internet connections. Shopping and a cafeteria were within walking distance, and a tram station was next door. I could prepare breakfasts and occasionally evening meals in the apartment, but most lunches and dinners I ate out.

I continue to have a student working with Dr. Gatti's computer code. Her work is going much better now, and as questions arise we are comfortable contacting Dr. Gatti for clarification.

We plan to continue our collaborative work. We will submit additional proposals, and it is likely that Dr. Talbi will be able to visit Lehigh next summer.

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