LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY
AND AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL COLLEGE
Department of Biological Sciences

27 September 2001

Dr. Joel Tohline, Interim Director
LSU Center for Applied Information Technology and Learning
Dept. of Physics & Astronomy
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA

Dear Dr. Tohline,

The Systematics, Ecology, and Evolution (SEE) division of the Department of Biological Sciences includes 23 tenure-track faculty and several adjunct faculty, and we would like to indicate our strong support for the Information Technology proposal "**A Proposal to Enhance Research and Instruction in Geographic Information Science (Geoinformatics) at LSU**" that has been submitted by the Department of Geography and Anthropology. SEE faculty members have expressed great interest in the development of research and teaching in spatial technology, particularly GIS, and the request from Geography and Anthropology appears to provide that direction.

The explosion in data available from traditional (NASA, TEM, and radar) and commercial remote sensing sources (satellites and overflight videos) has produced huge databases that are now accessable to academic institutions with trained specialists in imagery and sufficient computer memory to process digital databases. Remotely sensed data is being combined with terrestrial based information via GPS systems and traditional soil/vegetation data to provide geo-referenced maps that cover all current and historical land uses with biological distributions essential to taxonomy, epidemiology and ecology. In essence, biogeography has moved from physical-map libraries to digital-information databases, spanning scales from a square meter to the globe. The ability to access, filter and manipulate these databases is beyond most LSU scientists at present, but the demand for such information is high, cutting across units from Biological Sciences (ecology, systematics), Museum of Natural Sciences (biogeography), Oceanography (coastal wetlands), Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries (conservation and multiple land uses), Veterinary Medicine (epidemiology), Geography and Anthropology (biogeography, GIS), as well as the Colleges of Engineering (environmental engineering) and Design (landscape architecture). Currently, LSU has basic training in GIS through Geography and Anthropology, and basic training in remote sensing through Geography and Anthropology, Design and Engineering. The Department of Biological Sciences has no presence in this area of Biological Computing, but we feel that many of the positions described in the Geography and Anthropology proposal would provide significant opportunities for fruitful collaborations with many faculty within our department. As noted above, faculty with GIS expertise would also provide a unique opportunity for interdepartmental and intercollegiate collaborations at LSU.

Thank you for allowing us to provide input to your committee.

Sincerely,

Kevin R. Carman
Professor
Co-chair, SEE division

Meredith Blackwell
Boyd Professor
Co-chair, SEE division

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