November 14, 2015

ALTON CAMPBELL, DIRECTOR
UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM
UI COMMONS 315 A

Re: Letter in support of Alison LaDuke’s application

Dear Alton and Committee Members,

It is a pleasure to write this letter in support of Alison LaDuke’s application for a 2015 University Honors Program Grants for Undergraduate Research and Creative Scholarship.

Alison, a physics major with a GPA of 4.0, is currently taking my class in Nuclear and Particle Physics, Physics 465. From the academic standpoint, I can only confirm what is clear from her records, namely, that she is an excellent student. This Fall semester, she approached me about the possibility of applying for one of the Honors Program Grants with my mentorship. We discussed options and developed her proposal.

As described in the proposal, Alison will compute bulk properties of neutron stars. She will use both analytical and computational tools. I am confident that the resulting predictions will be of significance and will contribute to advance current knowledge on the topic.

There are several reasons why this research project will be beneficial for Alison.

- She plans to pursue graduate studies in theoretical physics. This experience will contribute to her preparation towards that goal.
- She will acquire considerable experience in computational physics. Nowadays, computational skills are valuable in the pursuit of any
scientific career.

- Involving undergraduate students in theoretical physics research can be a challenge. Often, this is simply due to the fact that the necessary background is missing and acquired only later, in graduate school. This project, however, is quite suitable for an undergraduate researcher. In other words, the student can be fully involved and actually understand what she is doing.

- Travel to conferences to meet and interact with other theoreticians and (very important) experimentalists who measure the observables which we predict, is a crucial part of our scholarship. If awarded, these funds will give Alison the opportunity to travel to at least two conferences. I am confident that we will have made sufficient progress to report on within about a year.

Concerning Alison’s aptitude for research, she is bright, eager to learn, hardworking, and very motivated. I believe these are the attributes of a successful researcher.

In summary, I strongly support Alison’s application and I am fully committed to see her to a successful completion of the project. I hope you will give her proposal the strongest consideration.

Sincerely,

Francesca Sammarruca, Ph.D.
Professor of Physics