



Dr. XXX,
Student Research Grant Committee
Ohio State Newark
4 December 2020

Dear Dr. XXX,

I am writing with my strong support for *Student's* undergraduate research grant proposal. *Student's* project aims to explore the diversity and distribution of Ohio's syrphid flies (family Syrphidae). This taxon comprises a diverse group of "flower flies" that act as pollinators and predators of plant pests for many of our crops and wild plant species. They are important ecologically, and to some extent economically, but most importantly, they contribute to the biodiversity of our state. As *Student* rightly points out, we have not had a survey of the syrphids of Ohio in 100 years. We are long overdue for another look at this interesting group of insects.

This year, my lab has embarked on a broad, statewide survey of bees. We collect them in passive traps (water bowls) that also attract and kill a number of other taxa. Syrphid flies respond to some of the same flowe cues as do bees and live in many of the same environments. They are one of our most commonly trapped "by-catch" taxa. Instead of throwing these away, we have handed them over to *Student* to prepare for scientific study.

While syrphids are similar in some habitat requirements to bees (they both eat flower products), they most certainly differ in others. *Student* has expressed an interest in using our syrphid data set, once the specimens are identified to species, to figure out which habitats and which landscapes harbor the most syrphid species and whether individual species have particular habitat associations. This doable project is well supported by a permanent staff member in my lab and myself. We have asked *Student* to contribute to the project by purchasing some of the supplies needed to prepare the extra specimens. In case you were wondering, insect pins are handcrafted, extra sharp tools that are made in only a few places in the world. They are required for specimen preparation, but also expensive. Most of her budget will fund the purchase of enough pins for her flies.

Student is a fine student who has taken initiative to get this project started and develop the concepts. She is enthusiastic, mature, and motivated to complete the entire project from beginning to end, which will likely take more than a year. She sees this work as a stepping-stone for a future career in the ecological sciences and I believe she will put in the work needed to see it through to the end. The project will help *Student* develop numerous useful skills from techniques in entomological science to writing to literature review. The bee



survey is in its initial months of three years of funding so it will be around to support *Student's* progress.

As the faculty advisor on *Student's* project, I obviously have a keen interest in the completion of this project, but I think that *Student* is also a student worthy of funding. I hope that you will agree!

Sincerely,