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Prof. Yves Brun
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Dear Yves,

Michael Axtell

I am pleased to write in support of Michael Axtell's application for a faculty post in your department. I met Michael initially through his time in the Staskawicz Laboratory, with which we have good links. Subsequently I have maintained contact with him through his published work both there and in the Bartel group and at conferences.

My impression of Michael is that he is a first rate scientist with an excellent future. He has a broad background – taxonomy, defense, RNA regulation – that he uses fully in his work. The recent ancient miRNA paper is an example of his ability to use diverse approaches – there is technology development, computing and evolutionary thinking. Michael's earlier paper on RPS2-specified disease resistance is, in my opinion, a landmark paper in the disease resistance field. The clarity of writing and experimentation make it stand out from some of the other papers including those on similar topics. I am sure that it will continue to be cited for some time to come.

In addition to his academic qualities, Michael has the personal characteristics of a successful research group leader: he is approachable and easy going but not afraid to participate fully in discussions.

I have been interested in Michael's work because he spans the two fields – RNA silencing and disease resistance – that are primary interests in my own laboratory. He is precisely the type of individual that I would like to attract here and I was disappointed that he did not even want to apply for our vacant positions – for geographic reasons he said. You will be fortunate to attract him to Indiana and I wish you luck!

Yours sincerely



Professor David Baulcombe FRS
Senior Research Scientist