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November 17, 2003

c/o Professor Rob de Ruyter van Steveninck
The Biocomplexity Faculty Search Committee
Biocomplexity Institute
Indiana University
Bloomington, IN 47405-7105

Dear Dr. de Ruyter van Steveninck :

It is my pleasure to write to you on behalf of Andy Lau. Dr. Lau joined the soft theory research group in Fall 2001, and has spent most of his time working with Tom Lubensky on a variety of problems. We were impressed with his research program, in particular his work on counterion correlations. I had met him at a summer school and even then was impressed with his direct approach to problems and people. Since his arrival, I have been extremely impressed with his creativity and originality. Andy has raw mathematical talent combined with good taste in problems. His self-deprecating and humorous personality will serve him well in the classroom. He will be a valuable member of any department.

Andy has been exceptionally productive in the two years he has been here. He has done two nice projects with Tom Lubensky, one on nematic elastomers and the other on non-thermal noise. His third project was done completely on his own initiative. Having attended a talk by Arjun Yodh describing the depletion interaction in polymer colloid mixtures, Andy developed a correction to the usual Asakura-Oosawa model. Not only did his correction term provide a better explanation of the data, but it also allowed the Yodh group to make more accurate measurements of the persistence length and chain length of fd virus. This was a very nice piece of work, in my opinion.

Last year he latched on to another experiment in the Yodh group on polymers dissolved in liquid crystals. He tenaciously attacked this problem, learning the theory quickly and working closely with the lab to fit the data and understand the details of the experiment. The outcome of this is a very nice draft which has been submitted to Physical Review Letters. Working with him on this problem, I was impressed by his energy: I would get regular emails and phone calls from him on weekends and late at night. The theoretical discussion in the manuscript was written by him and was both concise and clear.

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Dr. de Ruyter van Steveninck

11/17/2003

Re: Andy Lau

Page 2

Since arriving, Andy has established interactions with graduate students in my group and in Arjun's group. They all find him to be helpful, especially in suggesting new experiments and new approaches to their work. I think that his ability to interact is one of his strongest points.

Andy has the breadth and interests necessary to begin his own research program as a faculty member. Though he does not rely on mathematical and technical results like Jan'e Kondev (faculty at Brandeis), Andy has a similar enthusiasm and breadth. He is better technically than Corey O'Hern (faculty at Yale) and Alex Levine (faculty at UMass Amherst). In comparison with the recent post-docs at PENN, he is more energetic and broad than Brian DiDonna, though possibly not as deep, and is stronger than Ranjan Mukhopadhyay (faculty at Clark). I give you a strong recommendation to hire Andy Lau as a faculty member in your department.

Sincerely,



Randall D. Kamien

RDK/mst