September 13, 2016

Office of the President

ATE Program Officer
National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22230

Dear Colleague:

I am delighted to write this letter in support of funding the new NSF/ATE National Support Center for Optics and Photonics Education. For the past several years, I have served as a National Visiting Committee Member to the National Center for Optics and Photonics and recognize the enormous value-added benefits that the Center has made to meet the demands of industry. The tracer studies and evaluation data of the Program continue to reflect the excellent work that has been accomplished via the Center’s training and professional development activities, new college recruitments, curriculum and resource development materials, emerging technology initiatives, and expansive outreach efforts. Most particularly, the most recent data that point to the future employer needs for Photonics Systems Technicians, hovering at over 80%, was quite affirming of the work that is being done and what the future portends. Obviously, the demand for more technicians lays the foundation for more institutions and more students to become engaged in the work and the attendant need for a specialized, National Support Center.

The National Center, as it currently exists, has created an excellent network and has laid the proper foundation to transition to an NSF/ATE Support Center. The potential is really quite enormous throughout the two-year colleges where partnerships have been established to reach the diverse populations of students who comprise highly capable individuals from diverse populations.

As president of the Houston Community College – Northeast and a member of the National Visiting Committee, I recognize the high demand for well-trained technicians and have partnered with OP-TEC to expand our focus on Photonics. We have developed a plan to include Photonics within the core of the ABET-Accredited Electronics Engineering Technology Curriculum at the College. This strategic placement will afford us, and other colleges as well, the opportunity to optimize the current faculty and the use of our current equipment. As we continue to grow and expand our offerings, the National Support Center will be an absolutely vital component to our continued success.

Given the enormous successes of OP-TEC, the support that we, as a college, have received from the National Center, and the anticipated support required going forward, I am pleased to write this letter of support, without hesitation, for the funding of the National Support Center.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Margaret Ford Fisher
President, HCC-Northeast College