

October 7, 2015

An Open Letter to the Astronomy Community

I am writing to the newsletter of the Committee on the Status of Women in Astronomy to apologize for mistakes I've made.

As some of you may be aware, concerns were raised with UC Berkeley regarding my conduct some years ago involving some women in our field. These complaints, which were raised last year, led to an official investigation by the University, which concluded three months ago. While I do not agree with each complaint that was made, it is clear that my behavior was unwelcomed by some women. I take full responsibility and hold myself completely accountable for my actions and the impact they had. For that and to the women affected, I sincerely apologize.

It is difficult to express how painful it is for me to realize that I was a source of distress for any of my women colleagues, however unintentional. Through deep and lengthy consultations, I have reflected carefully on my actions as well as issues of gender inequality, power, and privilege in our society. I was unaware of how these factors created unforeseen contexts and how my actions and position have affected others in ways that were far from what I intended. Through hard work, I have changed in major ways for the better.

I hope this letter conveys my apologies and my sincere effort to change. My hope going forward is to have constructive conversations about these issues with the shared goal of promoting the supportive and respectful environment we all want.

I thank the members of the CSWA for the guidance and conversations toward making the Astronomy community a positive and welcoming place for all.

With humility,  
Geoff Marcy