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## **Student Accepted into NSF Program**

November 22, 2010

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Illinois Wesleyan University junior Derrick Rohl has been accepted into the Research Experience for Undergraduates Program (REU) of the National Science Foundation.

Rohl, a physics major from Glen Ellyn, Ill., will spend January to March of 2011 conducting research at the Cerro Tololo Interamerican Observatory in La Serena, Chile. His research, supervised by Illinois Wesleyan Professor of Physics Linda French, focuses on Trojan asteroids, which revolve around the sun in the same orbit as Jupiter.

It will be Rohl's second trip to Chile. He visited Cerro Tololo this summer for a seven-night observing run with Sue Lederer of NASA to collect images of the asteroids. "We are looking at how the asteroids rotate," said Rohl, who took hundreds of images at one of the telescopes in Chile. "On campus, I spend time measuring the brightness of the asteroids in our images to produce light curves, which let us see how fast each asteroid is spinning."

Rohl's research with French and Lederer was presented at a conference in California this fall.

The prospect of returning to Chile is exciting for Rohl. "On my first night in Chile this summer, Sue and I left the control room and we stepped outside," he said. "I can honestly say in those unpolluted skies I saw at least one hundred stars for every one star I see in the sky at home," he said. "All I could say was 'Wow.'"

Along with his role as a teaching assistant to French, Rohl also serves as a residential community advisor for Ferguson Hall. For several weeks this fall, he joined Dean of Students Kathy Cavins on a radio show on the student-run station WESN answering questions from the parents of first-year students. "For that time, I got to be the voice of Illinois Wesleyan students, and that was great," he said. He also volunteers for student activities and works at the Mark Evans Observatory.

After graduation, Rohl plans to attend graduate school and continue with his astronomical studies.

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