



**AMERICAN ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY**  
**OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT**

February 20, 2018

Dear President Hanlon:

I am writing as the President of the American Astronomical Society to express my concern with the news that Dartmouth College is considering removal of the historic Shattuck Observatory. If this is indeed the case, I urge the College to rethink its plans and protect the historical integrity of the observatory structure and its present site.

The Shattuck Observatory is a significant landmark in the history of American astronomy. Built in 1853 by the distinguished architect Ammi Young, the building is an excellent and rare surviving example of the "Observatory Movement" in antebellum America. In this movement, colleges, including Dartmouth, answered President John Quincy Adams' call to action for American astronomers to undertake original research, equal to that performed in Europe.

The astronomical research carried out in the late 1800's demanded specialized, fixed instruments - in particular, equatorial telescopes, transits and clocks - set up in buildings carefully aligned with the cardinal directions and on high ground. Slits in the roofs and rotating domes enabled astronomers to make precise measurements of celestial objects. Dartmouth's Shattuck Observatory is one of the very few from this era to have its original structure intact. The building, therefore, is as much an historic scientific instrument as the Alvan Clark & Sons telescope it still houses. To remove the Shattuck Observatory from its original, scientific footprint would be a great loss to our understanding of the development of American astronomy and Dartmouth's pivotal role in this history. Today the Shattuck observatory continues to be an inspiration and a symbol of the importance of scientific research at Dartmouth and in our Nation.

I hope that Dartmouth College will not cast aside this important landmark in the history of American astronomy, nor surround it with dormitory lights. A dormitory can be built in many places, but an observatory, like a bridge, must be situated just so. The Shattuck Observatory should be cherished as part of the Nation's and Dartmouth's Scientific heritage.

Sincerely,

Christine Jones  
President, American Astronomical Society