Dr. Derrick H. Pitts

St. Lawrence University Trustee Derrick H. Pitts ’78, chief astronomer and director of the Fels Planetarium in Philadelphia, PA, has been named one of the "50 Most Important Blacks in Research Science" for 2004, as selected by Science Spectrum magazine and Career Communications Group, Inc.

Pitts was chosen based on his lifelong work and accomplishments in making science part of global society. Pitts and his fellow honorees were cited as role models for young people whose accomplishments are examples of the significant daily contributions made by the small cadre of African Americans in the field. In a survey by the National Science Foundation of 708,200 scientists, only 43,000 were black and Hispanic.

The "50 Most Important Blacks in Research Science" were featured in the September edition of Science Spectrum magazine, published by Career Communications Group, Inc., and distributed to 15,000 scientists and graduate and undergraduate students throughout the U.S. Science Spectrum is a career development publication geared toward multicultural communities designed to increase the number of minorities entering science fields.

Science Spectrum's honorees were celebrated at an event during the ninth annual Emerald Honors Conference for Research Science.

A press release from the Fels Planetarium states, "Pitts, the region's foremost astronomy authority, has been a vital component to the Franklin Institute for over two decades. After joining the Institute in 1978 as a museum educator, Pitts advanced to his position as chief astronomer and planetarium director in 1990. In 2002, he oversaw the renovation of the Fels Planetarium and was integrally involved in the design of 'Space Command,' the Institute's new astronomy exhibit. Pitts twice modernized and redesigned the Institute's observatory.

"Pitts is the Franklin Institute's spokesperson in earth and space sciences to countless media outlets. He co-hosts the award-winning astronomy programs 'Sky Talk' and 'Sky Tour,' which he developed together with WHYY-FM (Philadelphia's PBS affiliate). In addition, he appears twice monthly on WXPN's 'Kids Corner,' a local children's radio program.

"He has been called upon by the 'Today Show,' 'Good Morning America' the 'CBS Morning News' and 'Newton's Apple' to appear as a science advisor and appears frequently on MSNBC. Pitts has also written astronomy columns for the Philadelphia Inquirer, for South Jersey's largest daily newspaper, the Courier-Post, and has been featured in articles in the Inquirer's Sunday magazine, Mid-Atlantic magazine, Time
magazine, *Home & Garden* and the *Philadelphia Tribune*, the nation's oldest continuously published African American newspaper.

"Active in the community, Pitts finds time to visit school classes and is a member of Tuskegee Airmen Incorporated, Philadelphia chapter. His career has been recognized with one of Philadelphia's highest honors, the Liberty Bell Award. He is also a recipient of the George Washington Carver Scientist of the Year Award and is a 2004 inductee into the Germantown Historical Society's Hall of Fame."