Contact Angle Measurements by AFM on Droplets of Intermediate-Length Alkanes Adsorbed on SiO$_2$ Surfaces$^1$ M. BAI, H. TAUB, U. Mo.-Columbia, K. KNORR, U. des Saarlandes, U.G. VOLKMANN, P. U. Católica Chile, F.Y. HANSEN, Tech. U. Denmark — We have recently discovered that films of intermediate-length alkanes ($n$-C$_n$H$_{2n+2}$; 24 < $n$ < 40) do not completely wet a SiO$_2$ surface on a nanometer length scale [2]. In a narrow temperature range near the bulk melting point $T_b$, we observe a single layer of molecules oriented with their long axis perpendicular to the surface. On heating just above $T_b$, these molecules undergo a delayering transition to three-dimensional droplets that remain present up to their evaporation point. Here we report measurements by noncontact Atomic Force Microscopy of the contact angle of these droplets for a film of hexatriacontane ($n$-C$_{36}$H$_{74}$ or C36). Our preliminary measurements indicate that there is a weak maximum in the contact angle at $\sim T_b + 3$ °C. Further measurements are planned to investigate whether the weak maximum in the contact angle is consistent with the droplets supporting a surface freezing effect as at the bulk fluid/air interface. $^2$M. Bai, K. Knorr, M. J. Simpson, S. Trogisch, H. Taub, S. N. Ehrlich, H. Mo, U. G. Volkmann, F. Y. Hansen, cond-mat/0611497.

$^1$Supported by Grant Nos. NSF DMR-0411748, DOE W-7405-Eng-82 and W-31-109-Eng-38, and FONDECYT 1010548 and 7010548.