

## Los Alamos Postdoc Newsletter

### REMINDER!!!

The next GA Meeting is Feb. 13th

The next Postdoc Social is Feb. 6th. Please see the events calendar.

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Submissions Welcome  
lapa\_communications@lanl.gov

Visit LAPA's website @  
<http://www.lanl.gov/projects/pda/>

## The LANL Conversion Process: Some Observations



**Nathan Mara, LAPA Conversion Committee Chair**  
MPA-CINT

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Phone: 505-667-8665

The LAPA conversion committee is tasked with demystifying the conversion process from Postdoc to Technical Staff Member (TSM) at LANL. A seminar series on the subject, including presentations from management and recently converted postdocs, as well as the compilation of several years' conversion data from the Postdoc Office has uncovered some general guidelines for conversion that may prove useful to postdocs who wish to become TSMs. The following information is not intended to be used as a "roadmap" to conversion due to the notable differences in the conversion process from division to division, or even group to group. Ultimately, the best way to gather specific information is to speak with your mentor and group/division management.

### Conversion Process:

The typical postdoctoral appointment at LANL is 2 years, with a possible 1-year extension after the initial appointment. Given this relatively short life cycle, postdocs interested in conversion to TSM should speak with their mentors and line management regarding conversion as soon as possible after coming to LANL, with a concerted push to begin conversion roughly 12-18 months into the postdoctoral appointment. The conversion process from a paperwork standpoint consists of a "conversion package", prepared by the hiring manager, submitted to group level management up through the Laboratory Director for approval. The exact contents of the conversion package can vary, but needs to justify to management that the postdoc requires conversion to permanent staff. These packages can contain a justification letter, a job description, the applicant's CV, letters of recommendation, and transcripts. Once the package is submitted for approval, the time to gather signatures from management can range from a couple of weeks to several months. This process has been known to be accelerated if the candidate has competing offers from other outside employers.

### What makes a qualified conversion candidate?

According to conversion seminar speakers, the qualifications that are required for conversion are quite varied. Some groups/divisions require a very aggressive publication history during the postdoc's first year (~5 first



authored papers/year), or require the postdoc to (co)author proposals to secure part or all of their own funding for their new TSM position. Other groups may have funding available and a position open. It is crucial to be aware of increased costs due to conversion to TSM status especially if securing one's own funding. For example, a postdoc in MPA division (FY08 estimate) making a salary of \$60-70k can be expected to have a fully loaded cost to programs of \$107k-\$114k. A TSM making \$100k-110k can cost up to \$320k/year, depending on the type of code used.

More general recommendations have been made regarding desired skills/qualifications, and include an emphasis on cutting edge skills and techniques, and the need for a clearance for some positions. With the average age of TSM's at LANL well past 40 years old, new techniques recently learned in graduate school can bring value to your proposed TSM conversion package. It can also help to be involved in one of the "hot" expanding areas of research (Nano/MEMS, fuel cells, catalysis, detectors, etc). Visibility is key to making candidate abilities known. Presentations and publications inside and outside the lab showcase these abilities, and open the door for new collaborations. Doing some overtime work for other projects can also give publicity—the more people who know that you and your work is high-quality, the greater your value to the lab. If the candidate has a clearance (this can take over a year to acquire), the number of possible projects/collaborations increases, as does the number of possible TSM positions. However, in some groups, a clearance and therefore US citizenship is not required for conversion to TSM status.

From recent conversion statistics (see the [LAPA webpage](#) for latest stats), some divisions convert postdocs at the same rate year after year, and others are slowing their hiring. These statistics can guide the postdoc to a division where expertise is needed. It is important to note regardless of hiring division, that when finding a position at LANL, a conversion is not considered a new hire, but rather a change of position within the lab, so hiring freezes may not apply to postdoc conversion, and there may not need to be an official job posting for the TSM position. Therefore, speaking to one's management and other TSMs is crucial for finding areas of need in specific divisions/groups, for there may not be an official posting on the LANL website. Historically, over 50% of TSM hires are from the postdoc population, and this percentage can swell in times of external hiring freezes. Since LAPA's inception in 2006, a high percentage of postdocs active in LAPA have been converted to TSMs despite relatively slow hiring overall. It is clear from this trend that hiring managers value the leadership that is fostered within LAPA's ranks, so involvement in LAPA is a good way to expand visibility and demonstrate leadership across the Lab.



## Recent Events

Postdoc Night  
January 9, 2008  
5:30 - 8:30 PM  
Lala's Cocina



## Upcoming Events

### GA Meeting

Date: February 13, 2008

Time: 12:00-1:00 PM

Where: Otowi Cafeteria, Siderooms A&B

### Policy Committee Meeting

Date: February 7, 2008

Time: 4:00 PM

Where: TBA, email [lapa\\_policy@lanl.gov](mailto:lapa_policy@lanl.gov) for info

### Postdoc Night

Date: February 6, 2008

Time: 5:30-8:30 PM

Where: La La's Cocina (on Trinity across from Sonic)

### Career Committee Meeting

Date: February 13, 2008

Time: After the GA meeting (~ 1:00 - 2:00 PM)

Where: Otowi Cafeteria, Siderooms A&B

## LAPA Committee Reports

### Policy Committee

December 12, 2007

1. The Policy Committee will meet December 17, 2007, 4 PM at HRL Library. Discussion: changes and interpretation of the LAPA bylaws to retain participation in the association. A Google Document was created as a discussion board for topics at the upcoming meeting. All LAPA members please comment prior to the meeting at:

[http://docs.google.com/Doc?docid=dg83qvw\\_0fz5jqb&hl=en](http://docs.google.com/Doc?docid=dg83qvw_0fz5jqb&hl=en)

2. Still on the Policy Committee calendar: Employee concerns meeting. The meeting originally set for Jan 17, 2008 will be changed. A meeting in February is tentatively planned. Announcement forthcoming.

3. Recent activities: Meeting in Socorro, NM on December 5, 2007 regarding postdoc role in an NSF ADVANCE-PAID program. Institutions involved: (1) NMSU: lead NSF grant recipient, (2) NMT: host/contributor, (3) LANL: contributor, and (4) UNM:

contributor.

- Brainstorm the needs of postdocs in NM in order to foster the postdocs-to-faculty pipeline. Identify postdocs and define postdocs at each institution.
- LAPA to help Universities in NM "start-up" postdoc associations.
- Other topics regarding increasing faculty diversity in STEM disciplines.

January 9, 2008

The Policy Committee (PC) convened on December 17, 2007 to discuss topics that relate to changing or modifying the LAPA bylaws in order to foster participation in the Association and allow it to function with less recordkeeping and "rules."

At the meeting, the PC discussed a Google Document that was introduced prior to the last PC meeting. The PC decided to narrow down changes to the bylaws to the following:



1. Changing the Quorum for meetings
2. Changing “voting member status” to “active member status”
3. Possibly changing requirements to run for office

The PC will be having the next meeting before the February GA meeting. Email invitation forthcoming.

### **Communication Committee**

December 12, 2007

The Committee held a meeting on Dec. 6<sup>th</sup> to discuss the Postdoc Orientation presentation. There is a working draft (available from the chair or on Google Documents), which is being prepared for a January start date. The Committee discussed ways to structure the presentation around the “postdoc life-cycle” framework, and there is a Google document set up to explore this idea as well. Email Jessica Houston ([jessica.p.houston@gmail.com](mailto:jessica.p.houston@gmail.com)) to be added to the list on Google. In addition, Nate Mack resigned as Committee chair, and Chandra Savage Marsden was voted in as the new chair.

January 9, 2008

- Work continues on the Postdoc Orientation presentation, available as a Google document (email Jessica Houston, [jessica.p.houston@gmail.com](mailto:jessica.p.houston@gmail.com), for access). We will have a meeting soon to finalize it and set a date for the first session.
- A new version of the LAPA poster is available for feedback, we will get it printed after the addition of a few more photos.
- There will be a newsletter in January, keep the profiles coming!

### **Finance Committee**

- Nothing to report

### **Social Committee**

December 12, 2007

- The social committee decided to move the date of the monthly LAPA social from the third Wednesday of every month to the first Wednesday of every month. We hope this change will encourage more new LANL postdocs to attend a LAPA general assembly meeting the following week and thereby get involved with the Association.
- Since the first Wednesday of January, 2008 is Jan. 2 and some LANL employees may still be on vacation, the social will exceptionally be held on the second Wednesday of that month (Jan. 9).

### **Conversion Committee**

December 12, 2007

- 1.) Proposed upcoming Conversion Seminar Speakers:
  - a. Zach Baker (CCS-1, recently converted postdoc)
  - b. Michael Blair (EES-2, recently converted postdoc)
  - c. Terry Wallace (PADSTE, management)
  - d. Fran Stephens (C-IIAC, recently converted postdoc)
- 2.) Need new postdoc for conversion committee chair

January 9, 2008

- See the newsletter’s front page for the Committee’s January report.

### **Career Committee**

December 12, 2007

- The committee has chosen Nenad Velisavljevic as the official committee chair.



## Postdoc Profiles

**Name:** Doh Lee  
**Group:** C-PCS  
**Ph.D. Institution:** The University of Texas at Austin  
**Research Interests:** Colloidal nanocrystal synthesis and physical chemistry of nanomaterials  
**Hobbies or interests:** Skiing, watching football games, and dancing with my wife.



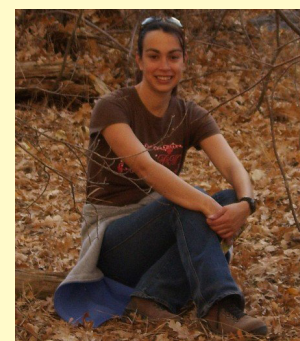
**Name:** Taraka Dale  
**Group:** B-7  
**Ph.D. Institution:** Univ. of Colorado at Boulder  
**Research Interests:** Nucleic acid biochemistry (DNA helicase characterization for flu dipstick assay)  
**Hobbies or interests:** Hiking, backpacking, snowshoeing, some cycling and kayaking, traveling, classic literature.



**Name:** Himashinie V. K. Diyabalanage  
**Group:** MPA-MC  
**Ph.D. Institution:** University of Texas at Arlington  
**Research Interests:** Synthesis & study of molecular systems  
**Hobbies or interests:** Reading, painting, traveling and watching TV



**Name:** Denisse Ortiz-Acosta  
**Group:** MPA-MC  
**Ph.D. institution:** Texas A&M University  
**Research Interests:** Polymers, material chemistry  
**Hobbies or interests:** Hiking, home improvements, traveling



**Name:** Ricardo Martí-Arbona  
**Group:** B-8  
**Ph.D. Institution:** Texas A&M University  
**Research Interests:** Protein Function Discoveries and Metabolic Reconstruction  
**Hobbies or interests:** Sports, especially soccer, football and fishing, and spending quality time with my wife and dog.





## General Assembly Meeting Minutes

### December 12, 2007 LAPA GA Meeting Minutes

The regular meeting of the LAPA General Assembly was held on Wednesday, December 12, 2007 at 12:13 PM in Siderooms A & B of the Otowi Cafeteria. LAPA President Michael Demkowicz was the presiding officer, and upon calling the meeting to order announced that a quorum was not present. The agenda was amended to table the bylaw amendments until a quorum is present approved 4 to 1 and the amended agenda was approved by unanimous consent. The minutes from the previous meeting (11-14-07), which had been sent out in the November/December LAPA Newsletter were approved without corrections by unanimous consent.

Committee reports were given by Jessica Houston (chair, Policy Committee), Chandra Savage Marsden (chair, Communications Committee), Michael Demkowicz for Zoë Fisher (chair, Social Committee), Nate Mara (chair, Conversion Committee) and Roshan Shrestha (chair, Career Committee).

A motion was approved by unanimous consent to task the Conversion Committee with creating a slide for inclusion in the Postdoc Orientation Presentation about the conversion process. Two LAPA bylaw amendments were provided in writing to the secretary. The motions are:

#### **Motion to Amend Article II in Regards to defining the acronym LANL throughout the bylaws**

Whereas, the Los Alamos Postdoc Association Bylaws refer to the acronym, LANL, in at least one location;

Resolved by the Los Alamos Postdoc Association, That the following words be inserted in the first sentence of Article II after the words "Los Alamos National Laboratory":

"(LANL)"

#### **Motion to Amend the Bylaws Title, Article I, and Article II in Regards to referring to the Los Alamos Postdoctoral Association as the Los Alamos Postdoc Association**

Whereas, the Los Alamos Postdoc Association is named thus:

Resolved by the Los Alamos Postdoc Association, That the following words in the Bylaws Title, Article I, and Article II be stricken and replaced:

"Postdoctoral" with "Postdoc"

In unfinished business there was a discussion about sending the LAPA newsletter to LAPA Alumni. The Postdoc Office has been working on an Alumni database, and therefore the motion to task the Secretary to send out the newsletter and the motion to create a special committee to create an Alumni database were each defeated by votes of 7 against and 0 for.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:49 PM.

### January 9th, 2008 LAPA GA Meeting Minutes

The regular meeting of the LAPA General Assembly was held on Wednesday, January 9th, 2008 at 12:01 PM in the conference room of the MSL. LAPA President Nate Mack was the presiding officer, and upon calling the meeting to order announced that a quorum was present. The agenda was amended to include a report from the conversion committee (Nate Mara, chair). The amended agenda was then approved without objection. The minutes from the previous meeting (December 12th, 2007), which had been sent out with the announcement for the January 9th, 2008 GA meeting were approved without objection.

Committee reports were given by Chandra Savage Marsden (chair, Communications Committee), Jessica Houston (chair, Policy Committee) and Nate Mara (chair, Conversion Committee).

# Los Alamos Postdoc Newsletter

January 2008

The motion made at the December 12th, 2007 GA meeting, *Motion to Amend Article II in Regards to defining the acronym LANL throughout the bylaws*, was passed without objection to become LAPA Resolution 6. The motion made at the December 12, 2007 GA Meeting, *Motion to Amend the Bylaws Title, Article I, and Article II in Regards to referring to the Los Alamos Postdoctoral Association as the Los Alamos Postdoc Association*, was passed without objection to become LAPA Resolution 7.

The unfinished business from the December 12th, 2007 GA meeting was approved by unanimous consent. A motion was made and passed (11 to 0) to postpone the voting on LAPA Resolutions 2 (*Motion to Amend Article III, Section 2, Clause A in Regards to the Number of Allowed Unexcused Absences*) and 3 (*Motion to Amend Article III, Section 2 in Regards to the Participation of Voting Members in Standing Committees*) to become bylaws until the Policy Committee can discuss the implications to bylaw amendments that may better address these issues. LAPA Resolution 4, *Motion to Amend Article V, Section 2, in Regards to the Duties of the Vice-President*, passed (11 to 0) to become a bylaw amendment. LAPA Resolution 5, *Motion to Amend Article III, Section 2, Clause B in Regards to Excused Absences*, passed (11 to 0) to become a bylaw amendment.

One motion for a LAPA bylaw amendment was provided to the Secretary. The motion is:

## **Motion to Amend Article V, Section 3 and Article VII, Section 4 in Regards to the position of the Los Alamos Postdoc Association Webmaster**

Whereas, the Los Alamos Postdoc Association webpage is becoming static, with all new information contained in the Los Alamos Postdoc Association newsletter, the position of webmaster is not necessary and the few updates required can be done by the Secretary:

Resolved by the Los Alamos Postdoc Association, That the the following sentence shall be added at the end of Article V, Section 3 of the Los Alamos Postdoc Association bylaws:

“Additionally the Secretary shall be the webmaster for the Los Alamos Postdoc Association webpage.”

;and Resolved by the Los Alamos Postdoc Association, That the following sentences shall be removed from Article VII, Section 4 of the Los Alamos Postdoc Association bylaws:

“The Communication Committee shall appoint a webmaster to maintain the Association’s website. If the Committee fails to appoint a webmaster, the President of the Association shall do so.”

A motion was made and passed without objection to task all the committee chairs to review their committee webpages and provide the Secretary any correction and additions by the next GA meeting.

A motion was made and passed without objection to have the LAPA Social on the first Wednesday of each month.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:49 PM.



**2008 LAPA  
Career Fair:  
Call for Companies**

**Click [here](#) to  
submit your  
favorite!**

# Postdoc Program Office Announcements

Call for Nominations for the Leon Heller Postdoctoral Publication Prize in Theoretical Physics - details [here](#).

FY '08 Call for Proposals -The Intelligence Community (IC) Postdoc Research Fellowship Program - details [here](#).

## New Postdocs for November and December 2007

Gregory Chavez, D-6  
 Stephanie Eichorst, B-6  
 Daniel Eakins, DE-9  
 Florencio Garcia-Santamaria, C-PCS  
 Balaji Jayaraman, T-3  
 Hyun-Jeong Kim, LANSCE-LC  
 Zhijun Lin, LANSCE-LC  
 Justin Olamit, LANSCE-LC  
 Ricardo Marti-Arbona, B-8  
 Anna Matsekh, ISR-2  
 Doan Nguyen, MST-STC

Denisse Ortiz-Acosta, MPA-MC  
 Istvan Robel, C-PCS  
 Nathan Wells, MPA-CINT  
 Ming Zhang, T-10

## Conversions for November and December 2007 - Congratulations!

Zachary Baker, CCS-1  
 Csaba Kiss, B-9  
 Dzmitry Yarotski, MPA-CINT

## Calendar of Events

| February 2008 |        |         |  |   |        |          |
|---------------|--------|---------|--|---|--------|----------|
| Sunday        | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday  | Thursday                                | Friday | Saturday |
|               |        |         |  |   | 1      | 2        |
| 3             | 4      | 5       | 6<br>Postdoc Night!<br>5:30 pm<br>La La's Cocina                   | 7<br>Policy Comm.<br>Meeting<br>4:00 pm | 8      | 9        |
| 10            | 11     | 12      | 13<br>LAPA GA<br>Meeting<br>12:00 pm<br>Otowi Side-<br>rooms A & B | 14                                      | 15     | 16       |
| 17            | 18     | 19      | 20   | 21                                      | 22     | 23       |
| 24            | 25     | 26      | 27   | 28                                      | 29     |          |

# Los Alamos Postdoc Newsletter

## LAPA Officers

President:  
Nate Mack

Vice-President:  
Dhriti Bhattacharyya

Secretary:  
Gus Keksis

Treasurer:  
Kevin Houston

## Committee Chairs

Policy:  
Jessica Houston

Communication:  
Chandra Savage Marsden

Finance:  
Laura Stonehill

Social:  
Zoë Fisher

Conversion:  
Nate Mara

Career:  
Nenad Velisavljevic

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