

Spring, 2015

Einstein Postdoctoral Fellowship Program

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“The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious.” - Albert Einstein

Well then, black holes, dark energy, or relativistic magnetohydrodynamics are all beautiful! That’s a sampler of what Einstein Postdoctoral Fellows study, supported by NASA for up to three years of research relevant to NASA missions in high energy or gravitational astrophysics, or cosmology. Each year, we invite applications and convene a review committee who get to see what young cutting-edge researchers are interested in. This year, we received 148 applications for 14 positions. That’s a lower oversubscription than usual, due in part to a number of current Fellows taking faculty jobs! Applications were due by November 7, 2014, and the selection panel met January 14, 2015. That same day, we contacted applicants to offer our congratulations or condolences, or for a few harried aspirants, their waitlist chances. The list of new 2015 Fellows is now confirmed. Their names, brief bios, and their Host Institutions can be seen at <http://cxc.harvard.edu/fellows/>.

Every year we convene an Einstein Fellows Symposium, which is a whirlwind of cool ideas, devilish puzzles, and ever more spectacular graphics, but also a shmoozefest for the Fellows. Abstracts, PDFs, and even video of the presentations from the symposium of October 2014 are available at http://cxc.harvard.edu/fellows/program_2014.html, and we look forward to another such exchange this coming Fall.

What have current Fellows been up to? Wen-fai Fong (2014, University of Arizona) received a 2014 Fireman Fellowship, awarded annually to a Harvard graduating student with the most impactful thesis in experimental astrophysics. Chris Nixon (2012, UC Boulder) accepted an STFC Ernest Rutherford Fellowship to the University of Leicester. Grant Tremblay (2014, Yale) had a press release (<http://hubblesite.org/newscenter/archive/releases/2014/26/full/>) about a string of “super star clusters” strung like pearls between two massive ellipticals in a $z \sim 0.335$ lensing cluster imaged by *Hubble*, *Chandra*, and soon ALMA. A NASA press release (<http://svs.gsfc.nasa.gov/cgi->

[bin/details.cgi?aid=10082](http://svs.gsfc.nasa.gov/cgi-bin/details.cgi?aid=10082)) highlighted the discovery by Laura Blecha of a powerful blue object 2,600 light years from the dwarf galaxy Markarian 177 that could be a black hole recoiling after a galaxy merger, or perhaps a very unusual type of star known as a Luminous Blue Variable. Rutger van Haasteren and his wife report, despite the ripples it will surely cause, the non-detection by gravitational wave detectors of a new baby boy.

This year, I took over the duties of Einstein Fellowship Program Scientist from Andrea Prestwich, who has ably shepherded and developed the program since 2010. Though faced with a steep learning curve, I haven’t screwed anything up too badly. Yet. To my knowledge. One development we are all excited about is a new Einstein Fellows Alumni Mentorship Program. The breadth of experience amongst previous Fellows presents a wonderful opportunity for current Fellows to share their hopes, concerns, and strategies with others who have explored a variety of paths of mystery, beauty, and befuddlement.