



Lab researchers join new entrepreneurial training program

December 19, 2017

Four postdoctoral researchers at Los Alamos National Laboratory have been named Entrepreneurial Fellows as part of a new joint initiative of the University of California and the Laboratory. The researchers are participating in a pilot program designed to help early career scientists think about their technologies from a commercial perspective and bring them to the marketplace faster.

“This is the first program of its kind, where we award a fellowship as part of the postdoctoral experience at Los Alamos, with dedicated training and mentoring from experienced venture investors, and funding to pursue technology commercialization,” says Duncan McBranch, chief technology officer at the Laboratory.

The program will incorporate training and mentoring during the first six-month period, before the researchers embark on a six-month full-time Fellowship aimed at creating a new business in Northern New Mexico. It is expected that at the end of the program, the researchers will have a fuller understanding of market requirements and the best commercial opportunities for their technologies.

The four Entrepreneurial Fellows:

- **Anand Kumar** is developing a universal gut microbial cocktail to treat *Clostridioides difficile* (C-diff), a severe intestinal infection in humans.
- **Jessica Kubicek-Sutherland** is developing a universal bacterial biosensor that will allow for the rapid differentiation of bacterial pathogens in a patient’s bloodstream to quickly determine the appropriate treatment.
- **Vamshi Chillara** is developing a technology that would power implants using ultrasound, thus providing wireless energy delivery for biomedical applications.
- **Maruti Mudunuru** is developing a low-cost, energy efficient, and near real-time monitoring of the Earth and its environmental processes.

“This process allows us to explore the market space around our technology and really think about its potential commercial application,” Kubicek-Sutherland says. “These findings have given us many valuable ideas to pursue in our research.”

There is a national trend among students in graduate programs in science and engineering to look beyond the conventional career tracks for technical Ph.D.s. The program aims to increase the opportunities for young scientists and engineers to stay in New Mexico to drive innovation through entrepreneurship outside of employment at Los Alamos.

“I’m learning about the ins and outs of startup companies, how to discover the right market and transfer a technology to marketplace, how to build a strong team and, lastly, how to sell research to a broader audience,” Kumar says.
The fellowships will end in April 2018 with final presentations and a closing ceremony. Work on selecting the candidates for the second year of the program has already begun.

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