Director's Page

Frans Spaepen—09.10.07

Since the merger with Harvard in 2002, the Rowland Institute continues Dr. Edwin Land's vision of the ideal laboratory: a broad view of science and an appreciation for the rich potential for discovery in the contact between the traditional disciplines; a dedication to small-scale laboratory science; an emphasis on technical support of the highest level for experimentation; and a desire to let the best minds be creative without concern for the vagaries of the funding world.

Central to the Institute is the Junior Fellows program. Young scientists have the opportunity to perform independent experimental work for five years, with full institutional support and access to the Institute's outstanding technical and scientific resources. Every year, we look for candidates in all the natural sciences (physics, chemistry, biology,...) as well as in engineering, with special attention to interdisciplinary opportunities and the development of new experimental methods.

Each year, we receive a great number of applications from highly motivated, skilled and imaginative young scientists, most of which would have flourished in our program. Selecting the few Fellows each year has therefore been a challenge, but, as a result, we now have assembled a remarkable group of young scientists with both “good ideas” and “good hands”.

A look at the rest of this website will show the scientific diversity of the group. Not only is this diversity in keeping with the spirit of Dr. Land's vision, it also gives us a large talent pool to draw on and it fosters exchange of ideas across disciplinary boundaries.

It has been very exciting to see each class of new Fellows come in, set up their laboratories, develop their experiments and make new friends, scientifically and personally. The independence they enjoy is almost unique for experimentalists at this stage of their career, and providing it is the Institute's foremost aim.

I would like to see the Institute become an “incubator” for scientific talent, similar in spirit to the Bell Laboratories in their glory days. Young people would be hired if they had a compelling vision of how they would “fill an empty laboratory.” Working in small teams, surrounded by the best scientific minds and technical expertise, these scientists were the ferment of scientific innovation, and many of them went on from there to illustrious academic careers. It is my hope that the Rowland Institute will give similar opportunities to some of our brightest and most resourceful young experimental scientists.