

Reliability Technology earns prestigious Los Alamos award

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Technology transferred to Procter & Gamble basis for first-ever Feynman Prize

LOS ALAMOS, N.M., Aug. 27, 2013—Los Alamos National Laboratory has honored Michael Hamada, Harry Martz and a team of LANL researchers with its first Richard Feynman Prize for Innovation Achievement for the team's long and successful collaboration with Procter & Gamble.

Hamada, Martz and their colleagues worked with Procter & Gamble for years developing a concept known as Reliability Technology—a statistical method that P&G has used to streamline its manufacturing processes and save more than a billion dollars a year in costs by increasing uptime in their plants worldwide.

“Now that the Reliability Technology system has been fully developed by Procter & Gamble, they are bringing the system back to Los Alamos to help us improve our

manufacturing operations related to our national security mission,” said Terry Wallace, Principal Associate Director for Global Security at Los Alamos, who awarded the Feynman Prize to Martz and Hamada. “This is an example of ‘full-cycle’ innovation: We bring mission-essential tools to bear on an important complementary problem for industry; it helps us perform our primary mission job, and the innovation comes back to help the Laboratory in another area.”

The team was honored last week during the Laboratory’s 15th-annual outStanding innOvation Awards Reception—an event honoring Laboratory staff members who contribute to the development and transfer of LANL technology for commercialization. Other Los Alamos members of the Reliability Technology team are: Joanne Wendelberger, Ben Sims, Dave Higdon, Brian Williams, Christine Anderson-Cook, Earl Lawrence, Brian Weaver, Leslie Moore, and Richard Picard.

“Los Alamos has a long history of providing solutions to some of our nation’s most challenging problems,” said Wallace. “Turning science and engineering into solutions is ‘innovation’ in the truest sense of the word, and the Technology Transfer awards are a celebration of our scientists’ and engineers’ creativity and success in making a difference, not only to our national security mission, but to society as well.”

The Feynman Prize is named after the iconic physicist who came to Los Alamos during the Manhattan project. Feynman was one of the Laboratory’s first patent holders and Wallace noted that Feynman is also regarded as one of the greatest science communicators of the 20th Century.

“Once a scientific concept is successfully translated into something that can be widely used, understood and accepted, it suddenly becomes something extraordinary,” Wallace said. “Therefore, the Feynman connection is highly relevant to the concept of true innovation.”

“Harry and I are deeply honored to have received the first Richard Feynman Prize for Innovation Achievement,” Hamada said. “We are delighted that LANL provides a work environment that encourages innovation and collaboration. We especially wish to thank our LANL and Procter & Gamble colleagues and management who made this work possible.”

This year’s outStanding innOvation Awards Reception included a keynote speech by Pete Tseronis, Chief Technology Officer for the U.S. Department of Energy. Tseronis was introduced by Duncan McBranch, who is Los Alamos’ CTO. McBranch spoke about the role that innovation and technology transfer play in improving the quality and security of the outside world.

Los Alamos National Security LLC, sponsored the celebration, which was held at the Pajarito Mountain ski lodge.

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