

DID YOU MISS THE SIGN-UP?



We can't find you in the photo (above) of the RALI, Reception for Advanced Laboratory Instructors on March 7, 2007, at the Denver APS meeting. As you can see, the turn out for the satellite session, sponsored by the APS Forum on Education and TeachSpin, Inc., was exceptional with many luminaries attending. About 35 physicists, who share a common concern for advanced laboratory education, met to discuss the possibility of forming a new association whose primary focus would be on experimental physics education at the advanced level. TeachSpin strongly supports these efforts. We are committing financial resources to help realize this association.

This newsletter is solely devoted to the creation of this new physics consortium. For those of you who could not attend the RALI, we will report on what transpired. The newsletter also has notes from Harvey Leff, president of AAPT, and Krishna Chowdary, who originated the idea of the new association, as well as a short summary of the remarks made by Jonathan Reichert, President of

TeachSpin. We have also included the sign-up sheet for those of you who wish to join the twenty-five others who have already signed to inaugurate an organization that will "shine the spotlight" on advanced laboratory instruction.

HARVEY LEFF

Formation of an Advanced Laboratory Physics Association (ALPA) is a wonderful idea, which I strongly endorse. Those who teach advanced labs often lack the opportunity to interact with peers teaching similar courses, which as we know, are critical components of undergraduate physics education. Recently an AAPT-appointed Advanced Labs Task Force recommended a variety of actions to bring the advanced labs community together. The report can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/39hxr2>. ALPA will contribute toward addressing the issues identified by the task force. It will attract members from the societies of the American Institute of Physics and more generally from the international advanced labs teaching community. ALPA will add

to existing communications vehicles, including the AAPT Advanced Labs Listserv <http://tinyurl.com/3d9jyv> and website <http://advlabs.aapt.org>.

Who should join the Advanced Laboratory Physics Association and why should they join it? Anyone involved in the teaching of an upper division advanced laboratory course should be a member of ALPA for several good reasons. First and foremost, a successful ALPA will represent and further the cause of the advanced laboratory community. Its meetings will offer opportunities to interact with other advanced lab teachers and identify needed actions. All of this will facilitate the cross fertilization of ideas between advanced lab people with differing professional interests and from diverse geographical areas. It will enhance communications between those involved in the teaching enterprise with advanced labs equipment manufacturers, which could lead to a more robust product line.

To me, ALPA is an exciting idea whose time has come, and I look forward to watching it grow and thrive.

KRISHNA CHOWDARY

When I read Jonathan Reichert's November 2006 guest editorial in the American Journal of Physics, it was as if he had read my mind. Nearly everything he said resonated with thoughts and concerns that I had, and he made a compelling case for supporting the advanced laboratory experience for undergraduates. I dashed off a quick e-mail asking Jonathan some questions about his ideas and including some thoughts about his proposed advanced labs organization.

That e-mail initiated a phone conversation with the Reicherts. In the course of that initial phone conversation, I discussed my ideas to form a grass-roots organization dedicated to supporting and promoting the advanced lab consisting of those faculty and support staff who taught these courses. I was inspired by the Physics Instructional Resource Association (PIRA), which performed the same function for introductory labs and lecture demos and supported the tap-1 listserv. I wanted to see a practitioner-supported community like this spring up around the undergraduate advanced physics labs.

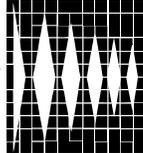
As a way to gather support for this organization and to publicly launch it, I suggested the idea of an open reception for Advanced Lab instructors at the 2007

March Meeting of the American Physical Society in Denver. I contacted the APS conference office, which was receptive to the idea but needed the support of some organization within APS itself. I then contacted Peggy McMahan and David Haase (the chair and vice-chair of the APS Forum on Education) for the support of FEd. After consultation with their executive committee they gave us the go-ahead.

In Denver, the TeachSpin folks and I handed out invitations to the reception along with bright red RALI buttons. The people we spoke with seemed very enthusiastic, though of course the March meeting is so busy that many people couldn't make it to the actual reception. Still, the reception itself was a fun event, with good food, drinks, and conversation, and it was exactly what I had hoped for in a collection of people gathered together by their involvement in, support for, and love of the advanced undergraduate physics lab course. We announced our intentions to start an advanced labs community group that evening at the reception, and we received lots of support and good feedback which only convinced me further that this was the correct route. It was an amazing evening, and really cemented for me the need for a community-supported organization based around supporting the advanced lab.

So I'm proud and pleased with my role in getting this off the ground. I'm very thankful to the members of AAPT's Advanced Lab Task Force for their efforts in putting together their report, to Harvey Leff and the executive board of AAPT along with Judy Franz, APS, and its Forum on Education for putting their support behind our ideas, and especially to Jonathan and Barbara for their belief in the ideas of a young physicist. I eagerly look forward to the next steps, and hope you will walk them with us!

It is our sincere hope that our colleagues from all over the world will join us. We experimentalists are just arrogant enough to believe that physics is, at its core, an experimental science. We all want to have the best possible experimental education for our students. And sharing ideas from *all over the world* is the best way to accomplish this.

TEACH
SPIN 

Advanced Laboratory Physics Association Inaugural Sign-up Form (A WORLD WIDE RECRUITMENT)

PLEASE PRINT!

Fax this form to 716-836-1077 or

Mail to TeachSpin, 2495 Main Street - Suite 409, Buffalo, NY 14214

Prof./Dr./ _____ : _____

School Affiliation: _____

Department: _____

School Address: _____

Country: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

CHECK ALL THE APPROPRIATE BOXES

I want to become a member of the new Advanced Physics Laboratory Association.

I will contribute \$10.00* to help start the Association under two conditions:

a. TeachSpin will match my contribution.

b. At least thirty (30) people agree to become paying members.

I would be willing to serve on an executive committee and/or help to write a simple charter for the Association.

I am interested in the new Association, please keep me informed about its activities.

* We will send you an invoice once the Association is established.

PLEASE HELP NAME OUR NEW ASSOCIATION

Several of us put our heads together in an attempt to find an appropriate name for this new association. Please vote for three names by ranking them in order of your preference on the line provided. (Use #1 for your favorite.)

If you have other suggestions, let us know.

ALPhA: Advanced Laboratory Physics Association

APL-C: Advanced Physics Laboratory Consortium

CALI: Consortium for Advanced Laboratory Instruction

CALIPh: Consortium for Advanced Laboratory Instruction in Physics

APLA: Advanced Physics Laboratory Association

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Let me use my Bully Pulpit to repeat some of my comments at the RALI. Faculty who dedicate a significant portion of their professional activities to developing, maintaining and teaching the advanced lab often find themselves isolated. No colleagues to work or talk with, few sessions at meetings devoted to this topic, in short, few ways to interact with other faculty who share similar interests. This becomes even more apparent if one compares this topic with almost any research interest.

Advanced lab instruction is demanding in time, expertise and funds but is poorly rewarded. We have no prizes for advanced lab instruction. Few faculty, if any, are granted tenure based on this work. In fact, most sober senior faculty would advise a junior faculty member not to invest time in this kind of teaching. Publishing exciting new experiments will not enhance a vita.

Communicating new ideas, new techniques, and new experiments requires new ways to use time at APS and AAPT meetings. I would like to suggest several innovations for your consideration.

1. Pay the cost of bringing the actual equipment to the meeting.
2. Have two hour sessions for selected experiments to be explained and for that equipment to be available for hands-on exploration by the audience.
3. Fund (NSF) "Mobile Mentors" – several senior faculty members who would have a travel budget which would allow them to spend several days at schools that request their expertise. It takes this kind of one-on-one mentoring to propagate the ideas and skills necessary for upgrading experimental labs.
4. Have regular Gordon Conferences dedicated to experimental instruction.
5. Both AAPT and APS should create prizes for outstanding work in advanced lab instruction.

TeachSpin clearly understands that this effort will help our company, but it also knows that it will greatly benefit experimental physics. It is for **both** these reasons that we encourage you to join this newest physics association.