



Welcome 2018-2019 Einstein Fellows

Why Become an Einstein Fellow? The Fellowship Experience

Alumni Updates:

2016-2017 Fellow : Dr. Sharon Sikora

Are you an AEF Alumni? We would love to hear from you! Please email [Einsteinfellows@orise.orau.gov](mailto:Einsteinfellows@orise.orau.gov) and tell us what you're doing now to promote STEM education.

Join Us:



## Welcome 2018-2019 Albert Einstein Fellows!

From a large pool of qualified applicants, to a select group of 58 candidates, to the 36 chosen to participate in Semi-Finalist interviews March 3-6, 2018, in Washington, D.C., the 2018-2019 Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellowship were chosen.

The new recipients are:

- Brenda Bartlett, Alexandria, Virginia
- Stephanie Harry, Hampton, Virginia
- Cheryl Manning, Evergreen, Colorado
- Kate McCann, Montpelier, Vermont
- Sharon McPherson, Stafford, Virginia
- Cammie Newmyer, Monte Vista, Colorado
- Pascale Pinner, Hilo, Hawaii
- Shawn Sheehan, Lewisville, Texas
- Brian Silver, Honolulu, Hawaii
- Rachel Stagner, Portland, Oregon
- Michelle Steever, San Jose, California
- Kellie Taylor, Emmett, Idaho
- Andi Webb, Fayetteville, North Carolina
- Cinde Wirth, Columbus, Indiana

The 2018-2019 Einstein Fellows come with diverse experience in K-12 STEM education. This year's sponsoring agencies are: the U.S. Department of Energy, the Library of Congress, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the National Science Foundation. In addition to placements with the DOE Office of Science, DOE also sponsors congressional office placements. While the agencies will benefit from Fellows' real-world experiences as educators, the Fellows will gain knowledge of resources and practices of the Federal Government related to education issues to be applied in their classrooms or to leadership positions in their districts or elsewhere upon completion of the fellowship.

The AEF Program, now in its 28th year of operation, is managed by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Science's Office of Workforce Development for Teachers and Scientists in collaboration with the sponsoring agencies and the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education (ORISE).

## Why Become an Einstein Fellow? The Fellowship Experience

*By Guest Writer and Current AEF Fellow, Gretel vonBargen*

"All life is an experiment. The more experiments you make the better." Ralph Waldo Emerson

As accomplished STEM instructors, Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellows not only teach others about the value of experimentation but often seize the opportunity for "experiments" in their own lives. While many people spend their entire lives, avoiding, preventing, or even refusing change, a commonality among Einstein Fellows is a willingness to experiment in their lives by

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### Alumni Update:

## 2016-2017 AEF Alumni Update

By Guest Writer and AEF Alumni Fellow, Dr. Sharon Sikora



On a cold, rainy night in December 2017, a dedicated band of scientists, storytellers, and one Einstein Fellow alumnus met at The William Vale in Brooklyn. The event? Science Speed Dating, hosted by the National Academies of Science. Scientists had seven minutes to explain the basics of their practice and research

seven times, moving quickly between the designated rooms where seven groups of people from the entertainment industry (TV, Film) waited. The National Academies paired the entertainment professionals with top scientists and engineers to create a synergy between accurate science and engaging storylines in both film and TV programming.

Jill Latchana, one of the project managers with the Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellowship Program, was tasked with inviting one lucky Fellow for the Speed Dating event. Dr. Sharon Sikora, a chemist and 2016-17 Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellow alumni provided each audience member with a mysterious envelope before she began. Her demonstration centered around hands-on National Science Standards for K-12 students as well as science education policy, topics she investigated during her time as an Einstein Fellow in Senator Brian Schatz' office. Sharon was a huge hit with her 7 minute demonstration and explanation of hydrogen bonding. Sharon's presentation was later featured on NPR as well as the social media for the National Academies.

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not only seeking change, but also embracing uncertainty.

For Einstein Fellows, the start of the fellowship feels like the beginning of a scientific experiment. Outcomes are unknown and the impact undetermined. However, alumni fellows concur that, in the long run, the perceived risk of leaving "real life" to move to Washington, DC, for a year is overshadowed by the long term benefits of the Fellowship experience. Here are some of the reasons current Fellows share for embracing the change afforded by the Einstein Fellowship:

- The Fellowship facilitates new learning: Originally from Alabama, David Steele has been teaching science in the Atlanta metro area for the past ten years. David learned of the Einstein Fellowship when working on his doctorate degree. A professor encouraged David to expand his professional reach and suggested that David apply to become an Einstein Fellow. Serving his fellowship at the

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National Science Foundation on the Excellence Awards in Science and Engineering team, David has been able to focus on teacher leadership pathways available in the each state. For David, the greatest benefit of the Einstein Fellowship has been the opportunity to participate in the many learning opportunities afforded an Einstein Fellow. David's mission as a Fellow is to, "grow as an educator and education leader to become the best person I can be."

- The Fellowship provides opportunity to combine personal priorities with professional work: Ruth Ann Dunn is a pediatrician who worked in public health with the Center for Disease Control and the Michigan Department of Public Health. Ruth Ann then joined Michigan State University to continue research in public health education strategies. Frustrated by the politics of academic medicine and discouraged by how little direct and personal impact she was having with kids, Ruth Ann moved into teaching. Ruth Ann says, "It seemed to be the best way to make a difference in kids' lives. I could (also) continue to study in areas that interested me." As an Einstein Fellow, Ruth Ann is able to continue to align her personal priorities with her work in the office of Senator Brian Schatz of Hawaii.
- Unforeseen opportunities may arise as a result of the Fellowship: Evan Smith has been teaching math for 14 years in New York City. As an Einstein Fellow, in the office of US House of Representatives Member Mark DeSaulnier, Evan's responsibilities included monitoring and reviewing legislation and activity from the executive branch in several issue areas. He also helped write education

legislation and shepherd it through the legislative process. Through the Fellowship, Evan is looking to develop a comprehensive understanding of the education policy landscape to take advantage of opportunities to make the most difference in the future.

- The Fellowship catalyzes the expansion of a professional network: Christopher Wright, an Einstein Fellow serving in the US House of Representatives Committee for Education and the Workforce for ranking member, and Virginia congressman Bobby Scott works on STEM and K-12 STEM education projects. Chris came to the fellowship after serving as an instructional coach and mathematics curriculum specialist in the Baltimore County Public School system. "I've learned so much about the legislative process and how government works and has a hand in our public education system." Chris hopes his expanded network and new learning will facilitate his continued professional growth within education. He has also realized one of the largest benefits of the Fellowship: "I had no idea the types and number of people I would be meeting who are effecting change on the national level or a global level on STEM education and education in general, particularly K-12 education in this country. The people that I have met, the resources that I have become available to me as an educator are countless. It's phenomenal."
- The Fellowship leads to growth of professional influence: Rebekah Hammack came to the fellowship after teaching for twelve years in Stillwater, Oklahoma. Becky serves as a Fellow at the National Science Foundation Division for Research on Learning in Formal and Informal settings where she, "appreciates

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feeling like I am making a contribution that is wanted and valued." While she did not always experience being treated as an expert in her field in her classroom setting, at NSF she feels her opinions, thoughts, and experiences are highly valued. Having recently completed her doctoral degree, Rebekah embraced the Einstein Fellowship as an opportunity to positively impact her future career path as a university engineering education professor. She hopes to "pay forward" the support of administrators, teachers and family which has allowed her to grow and expand professionally.

- The Fellowship provides the next stepping stone in a larger professional journey: Michael Romano joins the Einstein Fellowship as a chemistry and marine biology teacher from Acton, Massachusetts. Michael has a dual placement at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration headquarters Office of STEM Engagement and the Goddard Space Flight Center Office of Education Projects. Michael joins the fellowship with a broad professional development experiences, including working on a Nautilus ocean research vessel, facilitating Smithsonian programs for teachers and teaching in Hong Kong in the summer. Michael embraced the fellowship year as another opportunity for him to take the next step in his career. Says Michael, "I'm excited to see where this [Fellowship] will bring me next because it is different experiences that help me refine my focus, figure out what I am passionate about and leverage opportunity."

Experimentation and change can be unsettling, and may feel risky. While there must be a tolerance for mistakes, experimentation and calculated risk taking often lead to successful outcomes. As is true in many cases, often the higher the risk, the bigger the payoff. If the 2017-2018 Einstein Fellows had not embraced experimentation and taken a risk, they may never have realized the benefits of the Fellowship. As leaders and role models, the Fellows and all teachers can learn by embracing tough challenges and stretching themselves.



**STEM** Science, Technology,  
Engineering, Mathematics

Do you know someone who is a remarkable educator? Have you encouraged them to [apply](#) for the 2019-2020 AEF cohort? What are you waiting for? The application opens August 13, 2018. Share this newsletter, or send them to the application site today!

<https://science.energy.gov/wdts/einstein/how-to-apply/>

Check out these **FREE** resources from the Department of Energy's National Laboratories:

<http://science.energy.gov/wdts/stem-resources/k-12-educators/>