

AVS Recognition for Excellence in Leadership Presented to Arnold Burger

The AVS Membership Committee is recognizing Prof. Arnold Burger, Dept. of Physics, Fisk University, for Excellence in Leadership. The AVS seeks to recognize individuals who not only excel in science and/or engineering, but who also, through mentoring, have enhanced the careers of future generations who might not otherwise have considered or had access to opportunities in science, engineering, and technology. Their leadership in the effort to develop fully the world's human resources is critical to the best scientific and engineering progress. Recipients of this honor will have their profile displayed on the AVS Website, featured in this Newsletter and will receive a certificate of recognition.



Q: Describe a typical day in your life.

A: I wake up every morning at 5am and my day starts with a 2 mile fast walk. I arrive at my office around 7:30 am and after checking and responding to my emails I start revising my "to do" list for the day. I then visit the labs in my research group interacting with my collaborators and students and trying to make myself useful by sharing my experience. Summers are the busiest and most enjoyable time of the year when, in addition to the Fisk students, we host many summer research interns from other institutions. I spend most of my time in front of my computer developing new proposals, finalizing technical reports and journal papers and putting together presentations. A lot of my interactions with students and postdoc are also through email when I am able to add links and forward documents. I also spend a decent amount of time supporting the Office of the Provost in my capacity of vice provost for academic initiatives. This part of my duties relates to helping develop new academic programs or agreements for collaborations with other institutions.

Q: What are your leisurely interests and activities?

A: I enjoy nature hiking or spending time in my backyard gardening or just fixing things around the house, surprising myself on how easy is to extrapolate my experimentalist science background to being an effective handyman. Sometimes I combine these with listening to all kinds of music genres. I chat with my adult children almost every day, I like cooking and I love watching drama, thrillers, and sci-fi movies.

Q: Choose one word you feel explains you best.

A: Reliable

Q: What do you feel you are best known for?

A: I think that my collaborators co-workers value me for my success in maintaining a large and diverse research group that has consistently produced over the years many innovations and breakthrough discoveries.

Q: What is your favorite part of your job?

A: The best part of my work is the interactions I have with the students in the Fisk/Vanderbilt Master's-to-PhD Bridge program which I have helped establish 13 years ago. What I like about the program is the sense of belonging to a "family" and the fact that most students remain connected after graduation and return to help, inspire and advise the students who are currently enrolled.

Q: Is there a quote you live by or that inspires you, if so what is it?

A: "Treat people as if they were what they ought to be and you will help them become what they are capable of becoming."- Johann Wolfgang Von Goeth

Q: Who has encouraged you throughout your career and/or life? Inspired you? Did you have a mentor?

A: I was blessed to have many excellent mentors who influenced and inspired me. They were my graduate and postdoctoral advisers and the main lesson I learned was that one should have fun in research every day and this in turn will enable you to work hard and be creative.

Q: How did you become affiliated with AVS?

A: Have you always wanted to be a member? What motivated you to join?

I am not an AVS member but I would like to become more involved. My good friend, Professor Michael Williams from Clark Atlanta University has attracted me and a few of my students to the AVS community and I am very grateful to him for doing this.

Q: Do you belong to any other organizations?

A: Yes, I am quite active in the SPIE community where I organize an annual conference and I also serve as senior editor of IEEE Transactions on Nuclear Science.

Q: What has been your paramount experience with AVS?

A: I had the great pleasure to deliver an invited talk, last year when the AVS annual meeting was hosted in Nashville, TN

Q: What is the next big step in your career you plan on tackling?

A: In recent months I am getting very interested in the use of radiation detection technologies for the development of miniature satellites and in applying traditional ceramic making to produce as a less expensive route for preparing materials for radiation detection

Q: If you could leave one piece of advice for our future generations, whether it is science related or not, what would it be?

A: Try not to spend too much time and effort in searching for what you think now is your narrow passion in life and focus on learning how to embrace opportunities that come towards you and fall in love with the projects you are assigned to execute to the best of your abilities. And most of all, keep networking and interact with your peers, mentors and collaborators.