

# The Harvard Crimson ONLINE EDITION

MacArthur Program Names '09 Recipients

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By XI YU

Contributing Writer

Three Harvard affiliates were named recipients of the 2009 John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Fellow yesterday.

Professor of Applied Mathematics Lakshminarayanan Mahadevan, Assistant Professor of Earth and Planetary Sciences Peter J. Huybers, and Rebecca D. Onie '98-'97, co-founder and CEO of Project HEALTH will be awarded a \$500,000 grant, which can be used for any purpose.

"The award is an extraordinary opportunity: it gives us a forum to talk about [public health] at time when the health care debate is really heating up," said Onie, who founded Project HEALTH with Chief of Pediatrics at Boston Medical Center Barry S. Zuckerman during her sophomore year at Harvard.

Onie had worked in the Housing Unit of Greater Boston Legal Services during her freshman year when she met a doctor who talked to her about the link between health and poverty. According to Onie, she realized that families were getting sick because they were forced to purchase prescription medication themselves and could not afford to pay rent.

"We're never going to improve the health of our patients unless we start from the home," Onie said. At Project HEALTH clinics, which Onie founded, physicians prescribed housing in addition to medication.

"We really believe that there are wonderfully creative people in our midst," said Daniel J. Socolow, director of the MacArthur Fellows Program.

"They need time, opportunity, and space to really do their thing, and they know far better than anybody else how to do it."

For Huybers, whose work in climatology earned him the Fellowship, the award is an opportunity to further his research.

"I want to better understand how the climate works," he wrote in an e-mailed statement to The Crimson. "For example, I've tried to figure out what caused the alternations between glacial and inter-glacial climates over the past several million years."

Applied Mathematics Professor Lakshminarayanan Mahadevan could not be reached for comment yesterday.

According to Socolow, the key word is “creativity,” which the Foundation purposely chooses not to define. He disagrees with the nickname “genius award” because it is far too limiting.

“‘Genius’ is not descriptive enough,” Socolow said. “These people are not only wonderfully talented and very bright, but also tenacious, risk-taking, and bold. They are a unique blend and wonderfully creative.”