

Alejandra V. Mercado, Ph.D.

ECE Department, A.V. Williams Building Room 1365,
University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742

EDUCATION

- Ph.D. Electrical Engineering *1996-2001* University of Maryland, College Park. — Ph.D. Dissertation: “Adaptive Service Rate for Integrated Multimedia over Wireless Networks.” Major area of specialization: Communications, minor area of specialization: Controls.
- Master of Sc. Electrical Eng. *1993-1996* University of Maryland at College Park. — M.S. Scholarly Paper: “Wireless Communications: Cost Optimization for Mobile Paging Using a Tracking Technique.” Specialized in the area of Communications.
- B.S. Mathematics *1985-1991* University of Maryland at College Park.
- B.S. Electrical Engineering *1985-1990* University of Maryland at College Park.

WORK EXPERIENCE

- 2012-present University of Maryland at College Park, Associate Director for Curriculum for the Masters in Telecommunications Program, Electrical and Computer Engineering Department
- 2011 Montgomery College, Germantown Campus; Engineering Faculty.
- 2007-11 Hughes Network Systems; Principal Engineer in the Advanced Development Group.
- 2006 Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute; Adjunct Professor at the Department of Electrical, Computer and Systems Engineering.
- 2001-06 Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute; Assistant Professor at the Department of Electrical, Computer and Systems Engineering.
- 2000-01 University of Maryland; Lecturer at the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department, teaching Digital Signal Processing, EE425.
- 1998-00 University of Maryland; Research Assistant for the DSP group working under Dr. Liu. Research subject: multimedia in wireless communications.
- 1998 National Institute of Standards and Technology; summer internship working in the Information Technology Laboratory in the Wireless Group under Dr. Nader Moayeri. I worked on source coding for images with techniques similar to SPIHT.
- 1997 University of Maryland; Research Assistant for the DSP group working under Dr. Ray Liu. . Research subject: efficient video coding techniques.
- 1996 University of Maryland; Teaching Assistant for "Signals and Systems" and "Principals of Electrical Engineering"
- 1994 Otis, United Technologies; outlined possible communications backbones for REM (Remote Elevator Monitoring) for France and Japan. In addition, I assisted in the development of a list of mechanical and electrical components that could be monitored directly or indirectly for REM.
- 1990-93 LCC Incorporated; worked as a design engineer primarily concerned with the design, implementation, testing, and optimization of cellular telephony systems. These activities were performed for clients in the United States of America, the United States of Mexico, Puerto Rico, Chile, Spain, Brazil, Colombia, Portugal, and France.

ACADEMIC WORK

Recent Research Areas

- We explored joint Network Coding and Cooperative Diversity for wireless networks.
- We devised a new technique for generating secret keys for secure wireless communications which uses the random characteristics inherent to the physical channel's deep fades. It is virtually impossible for any observer which is not exactly located at the receiver's position to know or predict the exact envelope of the receiver. *Even in the presence of interference* the similarity between envelopes of the transmitter and receiver is enough to obtain equal secret keys for both desired nodes.
- We created a physical layer cooperative diversity technique for ad-hoc wireless networks that permit the nodes for such networks to be as simple, small, flexible, long-lasting, and affordable as possible. Distributed transmit and receive diversity was used, aided by RAKE receivers to introduce a very simple synchronization technique, to enhance the overall SNR of the received signal and, more importantly, reduce power expenditure.
- We considered smart reconfigurable plasma antennae (TM Haleakala Research and Development Inc.), which carry the benefits of single lobe capability, multilobe capability, omnidirectionality, and 360 degree steerability – all with a single element surrounded by a plasma blanket - for cooperative diversity to reduce interference.
- In ultra-wideband communication, we used time-reversal as a method to reduce the delay spread of the received signal to increase channel diversity. Preliminary studies on the properties of a UWB channel were examined to better understand the feasibility and challenges of applying TR to UWB multi-input multi-output (MIMO) systems.

Panel and Committee Member

- NSF Signal Communication Panel (2004)
- NSF S-STEM (2006): Scholar Science, Technology Engineering and Mathematics
- NSF CAREER/COMM Panel (2004): Directorate for Computer & Information Science and Engineering (CISE), Division of Computing & Communication Foundations (CCF)
- Doctoral Committee Member on four occasions

Research Proposal Approved and Funded

“Smart Reconfigurable Plasma Antennas for Seamless Sensor Network Communications” in collaboration with Dr. Ted Anderson, Prof. Igor Alexiff, and Prof. Shivkumar Kalyanaraman. U.S. Air Force STTR *Seamless Sensor Network Communications* STTR AF04-T015

The objective of this grant is to develop novel approaches for space-time coding of sensor networks to convert spatially distributed sensor nodes into efficient, robust and secure wireless networks.

Publications

- B. Azimi-Sadjadi, A. Kiayias, A. Mercado, B. Yener, “Robust Key Generation from Signal Envelopes in Wireless Networks”, *accepted for ACM Conference on Computer and Communications Security*, Oct.-Nov. 2007, Alexandria, Va
- A. Bahei-Eldin, B. Azimi-Sadjadi, A. Mercado, “Analysis of Ultrawideband Channels for Use with Time-Reversal”, *invited paper for DCDIS 4th International Conference on Engineering Applications and Computational Algorithms*, July 2005, Guelph, Ontario, Canada
- H. Shen, B. Azimi-Sadjadi, A. Mercado, “Cluster Recruiting for Ad Hoc Cooperative Networks”, *invited paper for DCDIS 4th International Conference on Engineering Applications and Computational Algorithms*, July 2005, Guelph, Ontario, Canada
- A. Mercado and B. Azimi-Sadjadi, “Diversity Gain for Cooperating Nodes in Multi-Hop Wireless Networks”, *IEEE Vehicular Technology Conference*, Los Angeles, CA September 2004
- A. Mercado and B. Azimi-Sadjadi, “Power Efficient Link for Multi-Hop Wireless Networks”, *Allerton Conference*, July, 2003.
- A. Mercado and K.J.R. Liu, “Adaptive QoS for Wireless Multimedia Networks Using Power Control and Smart Antennas”, *IEEE Transactions on Vehicular Technology*, volume 51, issue 5, pp. 1223-1233, Sept. 2002.

- Alejandra Mercado and K.J. Ray Liu, *NP-Hardness of the Stable Matrix in Unit Interval Family Problem in Discrete Time*, Systems and Control Letters, volume 42, issue 4, pp. 261-265, April 2001
- A. Mercado and K.J.R. Liu, "Rate Control for DS-CDMA Wireless Systems Using Power Control and Orthogonally Coded Substreams", *Proc. IEEE ICC*, Volume 1, pp. 548-552, New York, May 2002.
- A. Mercado and K.J.R. Liu, "Rate Control for DS-CDMA Channels Using Power Control and Short Orthogonal Pseudo Random Codes", *Proc. IEEE Vehicular Technology Conference*, Volume 3, pp. 1716-1720, Atlantic City, October 2001.
- A. Mercado and K.J.R. Liu, "Adaptive QoS for Mobile Multimedia Applications with Power Control and Smart Antennas", *Proc. IEEE International Conference on Communications*, Volume 1, pp. 60-64, New Orleans, June 2000.
- A. Mercado and K.J.R. Liu, "Adaptive QoS for Mobile Multimedia Services over Wireless Networks," *Proc. IEEE International Conference on Multimedia and Expo*, Volume 1, pp. 517-520, New York, July-August 2000.

Chapter in Book

Securing Wireless Communications at the Physical Layer, Chapter "Secret Communication over Fading Channels", joint authorship with B. Azimi-Sadjadi, A. Kiayias, and B. Yener.

Patent

Systems and Methods for Key Generation in Wireless Communication: Joint RPI/University of Connecticut Patent Case filed with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office on October 15, 2008, and assigned Serial No. 12/288,023.

Course Creation and Development

UMCP, ENTS 689W Short Range Wireless Systems: covers the physical layer characteristics and performance of wireless LAN technologies including ZigBee (IEEE 802.15.4), prominent 802.11 standards, and Bluetooth. The course focuses on the modeling and implementation of physical layer aspects of these technologies, such as channel characteristics, modulation techniques and packet and frame synchronization, carrier recovery and symbol synchronization, ranges and data rates.

RPI, ECSE 6961 Wireless Communications: A comprehensive description of the concepts used in modern wireless and cellular systems. The general topics covered are wireless channel models, multi-access issues, such as FDMA/TDMA and CDMA with a brief view of GSM, descriptions of digital transmission methods in wireless, receiver diversity, channel estimation and multiuser detection, and wideband communications.

Courses Taught

Digital Communications (ENTS 622 at UMCP),
 Short Range Wireless Systems (ENTS 689W at UMCP),
 Wireless OFDM Systems (ENTS 759B at UMCP),
 Introduction to Programming Concepts for Engineers (EE140 at MC),
 Intermediate Programming Concepts for Engineers (EE150 at MC),
 Introduction to Engineering Concepts (ES100 at MC),
 Physics I for non-engineers (PH203 at MC),
 Digital Logic Design (EE244 at MC),
 Communications Systems (ECSE 4520 at RPI),
 Estimation and Detection Theory (ECSE 6520 at RPI),
 Digital Communications (ECSE 6560 at RPI),
 Wireless Communications (ECSE 6961 at RPI),
 Fundamentals of Circuit Theory for Non-Electrical Engineering Majors (UMCP),
 Digital Signal Processing (EE425 at UMCP).

Professional and Public Lectures

- Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Valparaíso, Chile: “Opportunities for collaboration in research and academia between UCV and RPI.”
- Facultad de Ciencias Físicas y Matemáticas de la Universidad de Chile, Santiago, Chile: “Adaptive Service Rate over Wireless Networks Using CDMA Subcoding”
- Polytechnic University, Brooklyn: “Quality of Service Control for Integrated Multimedia Services over Wireless Networks” (may be seen at <http://www.poly.edu/Podium/ees2001.php>)
- University of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania: “Adaptive QOS for Multimedia Services over Wireless Networks”
- University of Maryland, Baltimore Campus: “Adaptive Rate Control over CDMA Wireless Networks”

Reviewing

Journals

IEEE Trans. Wireless Communications, IEEE Trans. Vehicular Technology, IEEE Communications Letters, IEEE Trans. on Multimedia, Special Issue on Multimedia over IP '2001, Journal of Wireless Communications and Mobile Computing, Special Issue Advances in Resource-Constrained Device Networking

Book

Prentice Hall: “Detection and Estimation Theory and Its Applications” by Thomas Schonhoff and Arthur Giordano

Conferences

IEEE ICC, IEEE VTC, IEEE International Symposium on Circuits and Systems, IEEE International Conference on Multimedia and Expo

Academic Service

- Graduate Committee Member for the ECSE Dept. at RPI
- Undergraduate Adviser for 66 Undergraduate students at RPI
- Career Speaker at the 16th annual Sonya Kovalevsky Day at MC
- Collaborative Speaker at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Valparaíso, Chile

AWARDS

- 2012 Masters in Telecommunications Instructor Award, University of Maryland at College Park
- 2009 Hughes Engineering Excellence Award for Significant Contributions to Advanced Technology Development.
- 1997 Maryland Diversity Grant. The fellowship covered the academic year 1997-1998.
- 1997 George Corcoran Award
- 1993 Senatorial Scholarship, Maryland State Scholarship Board
- 1987 Senatorial Scholarship, Maryland State Scholarship Board
- 1985 Selected by the University of Chile from among highest ranking students in the Physics part of the University Entrance Examination of Chile