

LISA DIXON

2005-07 AAAS Fellow at the U.S. Department of Defense
Office of the Secretary of Defense, Program Analysis & Evaluation

With a dad who's an engineer and a mom who majored in political science, you might say Lisa Dixon was destined for a career in science policy. "Politics and science were simply a part of everyday conversation at my house," Lisa recalls. "I've always held an interest in government."

After obtaining her PhD in mechanical engineering in 1997, from the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, Lisa tried out many private sector career routes including stints in research and development, product management, technical marketing, and business development. None seemed like the perfect fit. Deciding she wanted to make a civic contribution as opposed to contributing to a company's bottom line, Lisa began looking at opportunities within the federal government.



Her search landed her a 2005-06 AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellowship placement in the Office of the Secretary of the Defense's Program Analysis and Evaluation Division (PA&E) at the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). Although Lisa was presented with an employment opportunity to join the DoD at the completion of her fellowship in 2006, she opted instead to serve another year as a AAAS Fellow. "I was considering a significant career change and wanted to make sure PA&E was the right place for me," Lisa explains. "Plus, the extra fellowship year allowed me to delve deeper into projects that I might not have had time to do as a government employee."

Her contributions as a AAAS Fellow included developing contacts in each of the Combatant Commands in order to collect data and provide insights for the *Airborne Electronic Attack Joint Program Review* and the *Electronic Attack in Irregular Warfare Study*; assessing the viability of "real options" analyses and methodologies for use by PA&E analysts to formulate recommendations on DoD capital investments and acquisitions; and evaluating the DoD's resource requirements for large-consequence management events. At the conclusion of her second fellowship year, Lisa was hired as a PA&E operations research analyst.

Calling the fellowship experience "an excellent way for scientists to try government work on for size," Lisa says she'd like to see more applicants express interest in fellowship opportunities at PA&E. "It is an easy place to contribute when you have a strong analytical background and an interest in the bigger scope of government activity," she says. "The department is full of generalists who have technical specialist's degrees and excellent analytical skills. AAAS Fellows who are interested in working for the government are a great match."