

Robert A. DiStasio Jr.
Portland State University
2002 Harold Zeh Award Recipient



Robert A. DiStasio Jr. is currently an Assistant Professor of Chemistry and Chemical Biology at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY. His research group focuses on development, implementation, and application of novel methodologies that extend the frontiers of Electronic Structure Theory in complex condensed-phase environments. By utilizing the computational techniques of Quantum and Statistical Mechanics, DiStasio seeks to address challenging problems in Theoretical Chemistry and further our understanding of fundamental systems and process of importance throughout all disciplines of Chemistry. When not doing research, DiStasio enjoys teaching undergraduate and graduate courses such as Honors Physical Chemistry and Mathematic Methods of Physical Chemistry, as well as studying chess theory.

Born and raised in Brooklyn, NY, DiStasio was the first member of his family to attend college. In the late 1990s, DiStasio moved across the country to Portland, OR and began attending Portland State University (PSU), where he was the proud recipient of the 2002 Harold Zeh Award *via* the American Chemical Society (ACS). At PSU, he earned a B.S. *summa cum laude* in Biology and Chemistry in 2003 while working with Carl C. Wamser and the late George S. Hammond.

DiStasio started graduate school in 2003 at the California Institute of Technology (working with William A. Goddard III), and relocated to the Bay Area in 2004 to continue graduate studies at the University of California, Berkeley with Martin Head-Gordon. In 2009, he received a Ph.D. in Theoretical Chemistry for his work on local and canonical approximations in Møller-Plesset perturbation theory with applications to dispersion interactions. This was followed by postdoctoral research at Princeton University, where he worked with Roberto Car, Salvatore Torquato, and Frank H. Stillinger, as well as Alexandre Tkatchenko and Matthias Scheffler (at the Fritz Haber Institute of the Max Planck Society in Berlin).

DiStasio has given more than 75 seminars and colloquia worldwide, published more than 50 articles in peer-reviewed academic journals, and is an active contributor to the Q-Chem and Quantum ESPRESSO software packages. He currently lives in Ithaca, NY with his spouse, Laura (they met in Portland back in 1999!), and they both describe their new home as the greatest combination of Portland and Brooklyn!