

SCIENCE, POLICY, AND SOCIETY

Initiatives by the AAAS Center of Science, Policy, and Society Programs (CSPSP) bridge the worlds of science and public policy through a renowned fellowship program that places scientists in Congress and executive branch agencies, and an annual forum that attracts science policy leaders. CSPSP also supports programs that promote mutual understanding and dialogue between the scientific and religious communities, provide technical expertise to organizations engaged in scientific research, provide a network that allows scientists to work with human rights organizations on major safety, health, and quality-of-life issues, and examine issues at the intersection of science, ethics, and law.

S&T POLICY FELLOWS TURN 40

The AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellowships hit a milestone in 2013, as the 40th class—the largest in the program’s history, at 279 fellows—completed their year of service in Congressional offices and executive branch agencies. Designed to provide scientific expertise to inform U.S. and global policy-making while helping scientists and engineers learn about the processes of policy and government, the fellowships have resulted in major accomplishments to benefit society.

The program also saw a record number of applicants in 2013, with 841 applications for these coveted opportunities.

In recent years, Science & Technology Policy Fellows and program alumni helped build public-private partnerships for science and technology in Muslim communities throughout the world, contributed to President Barack Obama’s task force on global climate-change adaptation, and stepped into top science-related positions in the federal government.

The 2013 AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellows posed in front of the U.S. Capitol.



The AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellowships program launched a networking and information site, FellowsCentral, at aaaspolicyfellowships.org.



Amplifying the reach and potential of the program, AAAS launched a new networking portal in 2013. Known as FellowsCentral, the website connects and updates the program's more than 2,500 past and present fellows. It offers news and information from participants who have gone on to positions in government and public service, as well as informative profiles of fellows, and a dynamic 40th anniversary timeline documenting the many successes and impacts of the fellowships program.

As part of the commemoration of its 40th anniversary, program staff curated an exhibit in the AAAS art gallery. Entitled "The Art of Science Policy," the exhibit featured some provocative works of art depicting challenges and wonders related to the natural world. It also served as a springboard for discussions about the intersections between art and science policy and the myriad ways they are mutually reinforcing.

2013 S&T POLICY FORUM

Science policy leaders at the 2013 Science and Technology Policy Forum grappled with how to cope with the severe cuts that have been made to federal funding of scientific research. Among the more than 400 attendees at the Forum, an annual event long considered the most important venue for in-depth analysis of science policy, some participants discussed the additional responsibility being taken on by nongovernmental resources such as foundations, while government agency

representatives shared their methods for stretching insufficient funds in order to preserve scientific progress and innovation.

According to Matt Hourihan, director of the AAAS R&D Budget and Policy Program, federal spending cuts forced by the U.S. Budget Control Act, known as sequestration, lowered scientific research and development funding to 0.79% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2013, the lowest level in 50 years. Such cuts are especially harmful to basic scientific research, which is especially vulnerable because it is not associated with immediate practical applications, said Presidential Science Advisor John Holdren, who gave the keynote speech.

The Forum continued with an exploration of the international perspectives on science and technology, and Korean presidential advisor Jong-Guk Song said that South Korea will spend 4% of its GDP on science and technology, and increase its emphasis on basic research. The Forum also examined, among other topics, patents in different sectors of industry, open-access online education in science and technology, and the effects of environmental regulations on the economy.

SCIENCE AND THE HUMAN SPIRIT

The wonder and beauty of the natural world constitute a realm shared by science and religion. In 2013, journalist Krista Tippett, author of *Einstein's God: Conversations about Science and the Human Spirit*, told an audience at AAAS that scientists should emphasize that wonder and beauty, as well

as the drama of discovery, to reach out to a broader audience, including people whose religions are sometimes depicted as being completely at odds with science.

“The most beautiful and deepest experience a man can have is the sense of the mysterious,” Tippet told a capacity crowd at AAAS during an event organized by the AAAS Dialogue on Science, Ethics, and Religion (DoSER). “It is the underlying principle of religion, as well as of all serious endeavor in art and science.”

Tippet’s appearance was part of an ongoing effort to explore common ground between science and religion. “We find it is counterproductive to advancing science to have tension at the science-religion interface,” said AAAS CEO Alan I. Leshner.

In 2013, DoSER received a \$2.4 million grant from the John Templeton Foundation to work with the Association of Theological Schools to integrate science into the core curriculum of seminaries, with the intention of helping clergy-in-training communicate scientific information to religious communities. As of the end of 2013, 28 schools representing diverse religious traditions had sent enthusiastic letters of interest about participating, and program organizers planned to select six to ten seminaries to participate in pilot projects for which they would receive funding to cover faculty time on the project, plus at least one campus-wide event on the relevance of science to theological education, a series of AAAS-produced short science videos, and other support. As the pilot projects evolve, conferences and a website will help provide nationwide dissemination of the resulting resources and sample curricula.

PROMOTING RESEARCH COMPETITIVENESS

In a continuing effort to provide expertise to organizations engaged in science and technology research, the AAAS Research Competitiveness Program (RCP) completed reviews of more than 500 research proposals submitted to Saudi Arabia’s King Abdulaziz City for Science & Technology (KACST). The proposals were the 13th round to be reviewed by RCP. Also in 2013, RCP signed a new

agreement with KACST to expand a 5-year-old collaboration to help the national science agency “to leapfrog Saudi Arabia toward a knowledge-based society,” said Ahmed M. Alabdulkader, Secretary General for the National Science, Technology, and Innovation Plan at KACST.

Also providing assistance to the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science regarding scientific capacity there, RCP Director Mark Milutinovich said his organization has drawn on similar experiences in the United States.

“A lot of the work we’ve done is tied to regions of the United States that have limited resources and need to think very strategically about how they can leverage their resources,” said Milutinovich. “The implementation is going to change, depending on local cultures and the people involved, but the challenges are the same.”

Domestic projects undertaken by RCP in 2013 included work with the Environmental Protection Agency, the Maine Technology Institute, the University of Maine System Small Campus Initiative, Nebraska Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research, Rhode Island Research Alliance, the University of North Carolina General Administration, and the Washington Life Sciences Discovery Fund. RCP also offered external review and guidance to state research organizations and networks in Vermont, Wyoming, New Hampshire, Delaware, Oklahoma, Utah, and Arkansas.

Two members of the AAAS Geospatial Technologies and Human Rights Project—Susan Wolfenbarger (far right) and Jonathan Drake (second from left)—took part in a training event in Africa, where they met with current and former representatives of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, including (l-r) Mary Maboreke, Jainaba Johm, and Andrew Chigovera.

