

Addressing Issues of Concern to Society

Through its science and policy programs, AAAS has long promoted recognition of the benefits of science and technology, and the impact that research has on health care, economic prosperity, and quality of life. Over the past year, the Association has continued to keep policymakers informed about the latest research and its implications for society. Guided by its mission and goals, AAAS followed the legislative process, providing legislators and the scientific community with ongoing analyses of proposals for federal funding of the nation's scientific enterprise. Other initiatives in science and policy provided ethical guidance to the scientific community, offered statistical support to document human rights offenses around the world, and provided judges with the names of potential candidates to serve as scientist-advisors, who offered objective analyses of evidence based on scientific principles.

Responding to September 11 >>> In the months that followed September 11, 2001, U.S. policymakers debated how best to respond to future threats of terror. AAAS analyzed funding proposals for the proposed Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and joined other scientific societies in recommending the appointment of a high-ranking official to oversee science and technology spending in the new agency, a suggestion that Congress adopted.

A role for science in combating terrorism was the theme of the 27th Annual AAAS Colloquium on Science and Technology Policy, which served as an important forum for scientists to communicate both their suggestions for improving security, and concerns that fears of terrorism could curtail scientific freedom. To further disseminate the ideas aired at the meeting, AAAS subsequently published *Science and Technology in a Vulnerable World*, a series of papers that captured the views of leaders in the scientific community.

Guidance for Policymakers >>> New scientific discoveries have often inspired legislative activity, requiring policymakers to quickly gain a firm grasp of the science that underlies legislative proposals.

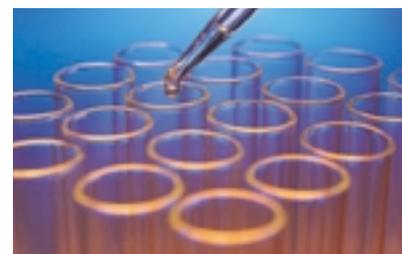
In 2002, to provide such guidance, while giving scientists and engineers an opportunity to study how policy is made, AAAS placed 125 AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellows in offices in Capitol Hill and in federal agencies throughout the Washington, D.C., area.

Sponsored by various agencies and by AAAS's affiliated scientific societies, more than 1,500 fellows have participated in the program that now offers nine different science and policy fellowships. The newest program, the Global Security Fellowship, was launched in 2002. Fellows in the other programs have worked on issues related to defense, global stewardship, diplomacy, risk policy, science and health policy, and the environment.

Competitive Edge for States and Universities >>> With its Research Competitiveness Service, AAAS has helped states and universities to plan, review, and evaluate programs and initiatives in research, development, and innovation, and to compete more effectively for federal grants.

State agencies charged with choosing from among proposals for research funds can sometimes be hampered by political considerations or by a lack of expertise in evaluating the scientific validity of the proposed projects. In such cases, AAAS offers a solution.

A team of scientists convened by AAAS recently helped the state of Maine pick high-quality research projects to fund with monies from a state bond issue. Also in 2002, AAAS sent a team of scientists to Michigan to assist in the state's efforts to allocate millions of dollars to biomedical research projects.



“It must be our goal to get the message across in an effective and meaningful way, keeping in mind that in our developing nation, there are many cultures and languages ... AAAS has helped us learn how to do that.”

JEANETTE HEWITT, AAAS Science Radio Journalism Fellow and communications manager, Rhodes University, South Africa



“Once the Japanese researchers and I were in the same room, we could discuss our research and gain a much better understanding of the implications of one another’s work.”

ELIZABETH SIMMONS, associate professor of physics at Boston University and WISC grantee

