



# Donald Kennedy—The Next Editor-in-Chief of *Science*

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On 1 June 2000, Donald Kennedy will take over as Editor-in-Chief of *Science*, replacing Floyd Bloom. Bloom's very successful tenure will make him a hard act to follow, but I think my friend Don Kennedy is a perfect choice for building on Bloom's success. Like Bloom, Don has a deep commitment to quality scientific research: Don's pioneering research led to his election to the National Academy of Sciences. Nevertheless, his achievements have extended far beyond the laboratory, Don's other careers, in science policy, public policy, and academic administration, have been so varied that one could easily write a book on them. But perhaps the recollections of a colleague and friend of more than 40 years will suffice to introduce Don to the readers of *Science*.

Don's laboratory at Stanford was mainly devoted to elucidating the ways in which animals generate and control patterned behaviors, using single-unit recording from identified nerve cells in invertebrates. But it was his reputation as a teacher that had led Stanford to recruit him in 1960 and give him primary responsibility for teaching a beginning general biology course. Don's extraordinary breadth as a scientist showed brightly in his teaching career. Early on at Stanford, he helped to completely reorganize the biology curriculum, a move that led to the pioneering "levels of organization" approach to teaching the biological sciences. Don could step in to teach almost any class in our core curriculum—whether on the structure of DNA, the physiology of the retina, or dominance hierarchies in birds. We knew he would give a presentation that was both polished and thought-provoking. In the early 1970s, he became heavily involved in setting up Stanford's Human Biology program, and here his broader interests came into play. The new program (of which he soon became the leader) dealt not only with the natural sciences, but embraced the social sciences and public policy as well.

Don's administrative talents were evident immediately upon his joining the Stanford faculty, and in 1965, he became chair

of the Department of Biological Sciences, remaining in that position until 1972. He also undertook increasing responsibilities at the national level, including chairing a pathbreaking study of pesticide use in the United States. Those activities and a growing academic interest in regulatory policy related to the environment and health led him to take a leave from Stanford in 1977 to assume the post of commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration in the Carter Administration. Among the challenges he faced in that post were controversies over the banning of saccharin, the alleged cancer cure Laetrile, the risks associated with antibiotics in animal feeds, alcoholic beverage labeling, and chronic complaints that the approval process for new drugs either allows dangerous drugs into the market or impairs innovation. Despite the pressure from both sides, Don earned widespread, if sometimes grudging, respect and left behind a strengthened agency.

One of the many things that I have always liked about Don is his straightforwardness. On his occasional returns to Stanford from Washington, when we would discuss his FDA activities, he never once made the standard scientist-administrator's claim of wishing to be back in the laboratory. Don's dedication to research had been obvious to all (I was forever being dragged into his lab to admire the latest squiggles from his recorder). But he had moved on and would say that, as much as he enjoyed research, he liked institution building as well and was happy to work for what he felt were the best interests of the American people. In those days, it was commonly predicted that Don would go onto bigger and better things in government after his tour at the FDA, but those of us who knew him well and understood his love of working with students predicted that he would return to Stanford.

Return he did, soon becoming vice president and provost (1979–80) and then

president. His tenure as Stanford's president (1980–1992) marked him as one of the nation's leading academic statesmen. He was adept at fund-raising, overseeing the largest capital campaign ever successfully carried out by a university. Don always gave careful thought to general problems of academia, as exemplified by his superb book, *Academic Duty* (1). He also taught extensively while he was president; indeed, I could always count on him for an insightful lecture, sparked with humor, on vocalizations or migration in my bird biology course.

The end of his tenure as president was marred by the so-called "overhead scandal," a tragic series of politically inspired attacks and misinterpretations, during which Stanford was eventually exonerated, but for which Don as chief executive officer took much blame. One of Don's finest attributes is his loyalty to his friends, colleagues, and staff. In that unhappy episode, this attribute became an ironic personal liability: He made sure the buck stopped with him.

After leaving Stanford's presidency, Don became Bing Professor of Environmental Science and Co-Director of Stanford's Center for Environmental Science and Policy, focusing again on issues at the interface of science and society. His return to the faculty plunged him back into undergraduate teaching and into a host of policy issues: environmental change and regional security, biotechnology and its regulation, and the valuation of ecosystem services. In addition to being a member of the National Academy of Sciences, he is a member of the Institute of Medicine and the American Philosophical Society, and he holds a number of honorary degrees.

His interests in young people, in science and the environment, and in equality of opportunity are reflected in his long tenures on the boards of Children Now, the Health Effects Institute, and Medical Education for South African Blacks. *Science* readers can be assured that their new Editor-in-Chief is one of the broadest, warmest, most talented, and most literate scientists ever to grace our business. We're lucky indeed to have persuaded him to do one more service for the scientific community.

#### References and Notes

1. D. Kennedy, *Academic Duty* (Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge, MA, 1997); reviewed by F. H. Y. Rhodes, *Science* **278**, 1726 (1997).

