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## Progress at AAAS

During his year and a half as executive officer of AAAS, Alvin Trivelpiece guided the organization in constructive directions. When his successor takes office, he or she will find a staff that is oriented toward the future and toward achieving goals, as well as an organization that is financially sound.

Most of the activities that Trivelpiece initiated are not immediately visible: their effects will be more noticeable with time. One improvement will be evident during the period 14 to 19 January, when the AAAS annual meeting is held in San Francisco. High-quality, timely symposiums have attracted a record-breaking advance registration. More than 600 journalists and others from the media will be present. Delegations from the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union will participate.

Another constructive development at AAAS has been the creation of *The AAAS Observer*. This bimonthly publication is devoted in part to informing members and others of activities of AAAS other than publishing *Science*. The need for such a different publication was made obvious when the results of a member survey were tabulated early in 1988. Only a minority of the respondents indicated awareness of the numerous programs carried out by AAAS in advancing toward its goals of serving the scientific enterprise and the nation. *Science* has not highlighted such information. The editors and the AAAS Board of Directors have agreed that *Science* should not be a house organ, but rather should emphasize the latest developments in scientific matters.

Looking to the future, results of the member survey will be helpful in guiding management with respect to initiatives to foster. For example, members are particularly supportive of ongoing AAAS efforts to improve the quality of science, mathematics, and technology education. A major program is proceeding. They also give high priority to AAAS activities in conducting seminars for Congress on issues involving science and technology. An expanded series is being planned for the next session of Congress.

One of Trivelpiece's initiatives was to institute an effort in long-range planning. The senior staff participated in a series of workshops leading to a 2-day retreat. Consequences of the activities will become evident later, but in any event, the mind-set of the staff is more imaginative and future-oriented. Early in the spring, the AAAS Board of Directors will conduct a retreat devoted to long-range planning. Subsequently, forward-looking programs are likely to be announced.

An obvious prerequisite for expanded activities is money. During the past few years, AAAS has incurred a substantial operating deficit, though its net worth has increased. The budget for 1989 is in balance with a contingency fund designed to cover some of the urgent needs that could not be met. Improvement in the financial situation came as a result of many factors, including stringent economies in existing programs. A favorable factor was a record-breaking level of outside grants, mainly from foundations. In the past, these grants covered only a fraction of the real costs of the activities they were designed to support. Through improved accounting practices, a larger fraction of the costs is being recovered, and more of them will be captured in the future.

With its broad and distinguished interdisciplinary membership, its cooperating 300 affiliated societies, its headquarters in Washington, D.C., and its exemplary publication *Science*, AAAS is potentially well positioned to initiate and participate in many constructive activities, especially those involving interdisciplinary efforts. Among its 130,000 members are about 28,000 who are listed in *American Men and Women of Science*. About three-fourths of the members of the National Academy of Sciences also belong. AAAS operates almost completely independently of government funding. The present intention is to maintain that status. If potentials of AAAS are to be more fully realized, it must obtain unrestricted funds. Preparatory activities, including tests of donors, are under way to provide a basis and a plan for a fund drive that is likely to be announced in the not too distant future.

When the next executive officer is seated, he or she will quickly identify interesting opportunities and goals, a staff that is experienced and cooperative, and a financial situation that in the future will permit many new initiatives.—PHILIP H. ABELSON