

Advancing Science, Serving Society

On the eve of the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), a new mantra is taking hold in the halls of our headquarters. A fuller version of AAAS's newly restated mission might read "Advancing Science and Technology for the Benefit of All People." It describes an expanding leadership role for AAAS on behalf of science and technology and their contributions to society. It derives from the recognition that in contrast to specialty or honorific societies, AAAS is meant to be inclusive. Although specialty societies may understandably choose to focus on advancing individual disciplines, the largest general scientific society in the world must have grander goals. It must serve both the broad multinational science and technology community and the society at large.

The new mantra also reflects the understanding that although some individual scientists do their work solely because of its intrinsic interest, our community recognizes its broader responsibilities. Our inclusiveness makes our members not only scientists but scientist citizens: citizens of a broad science and engineering enterprise who can work together to help ensure that advances in science and technology will benefit all people.

This is an enhanced focus for AAAS, not a new one. As the new chief executive officer of the association, I've been struck by the breadth and impact of our diverse ongoing programs. However, I've also been struck by how few in the science community know the scope of AAAS's work on their behalf. There is, of course, our flagship journal, *Science*, and our many online products that serve, for example, young investigators seeking new and alternative careers, or science journalists and policy-makers seeking the latest, hottest findings. There's our exceptional annual meeting—a place where one can sample from a fully stocked cafeteria of the latest issues and findings across all of science and technology.

But AAAS also carries out many less visible but important programs. AAAS science and policy programs have become the most authoritative source for analyses of R&D funding trends and implications. They are widely used by practicing scientists, funding agency heads, and congressional policy-makers. The AAAS R&D Colloquium every spring is a major forum for discussions that often help shape the future of science funding. AAAS's Center for Science, Technology and the Congress provides vital information to policy-makers through issue papers and Capitol Hill briefings. AAAS-sponsored fellows are well placed in federal funding and policy-making agencies and offices.

A wide array of science education and human resource development programs foster high national standards for elementary and secondary science education and advance the goal that all people be well equipped to enter a world dominated by science and technology. AAAS programs also help ensure increased access to science and engineering for underrepresented groups. As just one example, the association was very proud when last month President Bush presented a special mentoring award to the AAAS *Entry Point!* program for its success in helping disabled people enter the scientific workforce.

AAAS international programs reflect the fact that we are part of a global science and engineering enterprise. They involve such diverse activities as monitoring and reporting on science and human rights issues around the world, fostering collaborations among cross-national scientific communities, and helping build scientific infrastructure in developing countries. Our mission requires that we advance science and technology and their application throughout the world.

I see my primary mission as expanding the association's leadership role in and on behalf of science and innovation in a global context. As we hone our array of ongoing programs and frame new ones, meaningful impact will be the prime criterion for inclusion. A sign in my office reads "If it's not worth doing, it's not worth doing well!" And to expand our leadership we must also expand the visibility of AAAS programs. We need to share the "secret" that AAAS serves both its members and society so well.

As we implement our new mantra, we'll be calling on members to help us better serve society; not only in academe but also in schools, public media, and the halls of government. In the coming years, as you reflect on your AAAS membership, I hope you will take ever greater pride in being part not only of the oldest general scientific society in the world but also one of the most valuable.

Alan I. Leshner

Alan I. Leshner is the new chief executive officer of AAAS and publisher of *Science*.



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