



From left, Jamison McCarrison, UCSD Ph.D. student; Joshua Boyer, UCSD biomedical researcher; and Ben Kellman.

## AAAS Members Stand Up for Science

Scientists and engineers join effort to communicate the value of research

By **Michaela Jarvis**

As a fourth-year Ph.D. student at the University of California, San Diego, Ben Kellman works on the early identification of autism. Last winter, he grew concerned that travel bans and funding cuts being proposed by the Trump Administration threatened international colleagues and the overall institution of science. Wary of taking sides and “painting science as a member of the opposition party,” Kellman sought an advocacy group that was nonpartisan and working to connect scientists with policy-makers “to empower policy-makers to make evidence-based decisions.”

“The AAAS Office of Government Relations was exactly what I was looking for, and I wanted to support them,” Kellman said. “Problem was, I’m just some guy.”

An avid cyclist, Kellman organized a bike ride from San Diego to San Francisco, shining a spotlight on the value of scientific research and raising \$5,100 for AAAS.

“It isn’t a huge sum of money, but it is much more than I could have donated,” said Kellman, who says he was joined for part of the ride by some of his colleagues from the Lewis Lab for Systems Biology and Cell Engineering at UCSD. “And I now have a lot of friends who will look to AAAS for support in Washington.”

Kellman is an excellent example of the many scientists and engineers who have partnered with AAAS to support funding for research and to encourage evidence-based policy. Another is Karen Goldberg, who visited the office of Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) in early June. Goldberg is the Nicole A. Boand Endowed Chair in Chemistry and Director of the Center for Enabling New Technologies through Catalysis at the University of Washington (UW). She made the visit with UW colleagues Ann Bostrom, Weyerhaeuser Endowed Professor in Environmental Policy, and Patricia Morse, professor of marine biology.

Goldberg said Murray’s staff already agreed that fighting for science was important, but talking to them may have “given them more ammunition.”

Following the visit, which AAAS helped set up, Goldberg says she approached a new congressional representative with the information she had prepared for Senator Murray. “I think targeting all the newly

elected in Congress and getting them up to speed on science in general and in their districts could have real impact,” Goldberg said. “The visit to Senator Murray’s office empowered me to realize that I can speak up. It is not a hard thing to do. We as scientists need to show our legislators why the funding of science is so important.”

In a number of recent newspaper editorials, AAAS members have reminded their communities and elected leaders of the considerable value of scientific research in their communities and in their everyday lives.

Peter Agre—who shared the 2003 Nobel Prize in chemistry and whose study of aquaporins has helped combat brain edema, epilepsy, cataracts, kidney failure, and even malaria—wrote in *The Baltimore Sun* that his work was funded by federal research grants from the National Institutes of Health. Agre also pointed out that technologies we rely on every day—such as the Internet, smartphones, microwave ovens, and GPS—were developed with federally funded research.

Eric Fossum invented and commercialized the image sensor behind smartphone cameras, swallowable pill cameras, and GoPros—in total about 4 billion cameras each year. The technology came out of NASA research in the early 1990s. In his editorial in the *Concord Monitor*, Fossum wrote, “For generations, lawmakers on both sides of the aisle have supported continued investment in basic and applied research because they witnessed and celebrated the profound and positive impacts that these investments have on our health, economy, and global leadership. Across every industry and sector, investment in research and development provides clear opportunities for Americans and advances economic prosperity.”

To help members get involved in speaking out for science, AAAS has developed resources ranging from tutorials about the federal budget to an advocacy toolkit, at [forceforscience.org/toolkit](http://forceforscience.org/toolkit), that offers suggestions for improving communication skills, community-building, and connecting with policy-makers, to name just a few of its features.

As Kellman points out, AAAS and its members can create a valuable synergy by working together.

“Separately, we can only gripe about how people should listen to us more,” he said. “AAAS is a group that can amplify our individual voices into a cohesive and compelling message.”

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