



AAAS 2012 PRESIDENT

William H. Press: Seeking the Possible in Difficult Times

Support for science might be expected to suffer in a year of election-driven partisanship and a tough fiscal environment. But as he prepares to assume the presidency of AAAS, William Press sees some positive aspects: bipartisan agreement on key U.S. science policy goals, a renewed national focus on science education, a strong set of international collaborations, and new chances to share the beauty and benefits of science with the public.

While news reports and campaigns stress conflict, members of both parties recognize that investments in innovation and education are vital to American success and generally agree on the need for federal research funding, said Press, a professor of computer science and integrative biology at the University of Texas at Austin.

“The political debate now is not about whether basic, fundamental research is worth supporting,” he said in a recent interview. “It’s about doing enough of it, and, wherever possible, coupling it to the economy.” When partisan arguments arise, Press said, they will reflect political and philosophical differences about government’s role in transforming basic research into applications.

And that, he said, suggests an important role for U.S. AAAS members and other scientists and engineers: They can join the effort to resolve complex policy problems—from a comprehensive energy plan to a modernized health care system—by visiting congressional offices in their home districts. Although individual scientists may have partisan leanings, “science is intrinsically nonpartisan,” he said. “We can educate our members of Congress and their staffs on what we believe are the facts, and how certain we are about them.”

As a member of the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology

(PCAST) for the past 2 years, Press has played an active role in bringing science to bear on national policies. A noted researcher whose work has spanned a remarkable range of disciplines—from computer science to genomics, statistical methods, astrophysics, and international security—he also served as deputy laboratory director for science and technology at the Los Alamos National Laboratory from 1998 to 2004.

Press will succeed Nina V. Fedoroff as president when the AAAS Annual Meeting closes on 20 February. Fedoroff will begin a 1-year

term as chairperson of the AAAS Board.

As an astrophysicist at Harvard University from 1976 to 1998, Press was best known for his collaboration on the Press-Schechter formalism, which predicts the masses of galaxies within the universe, as well as his work on supernovae to estimate cosmic distances, which helped clear a path to the discovery that the expansion of the universe is accelerating. The power of computational science is the constant in his career, from his *Numerical Recipes* books on scientific computing and more recent projects in molecular biology and clinical trials.

“I had such fun, and was productive riding this wave in the physical sciences,” he said, “that I just could never forgive myself if I didn’t take the opportunity to stay on this same wave and do computational biology.”

Press’s eclectic interests make him an excellent ambassador for a message that he wants the public to understand: Science doesn’t proceed in a neat or linear fashion. Who could have predicted, he asked, that a probability distribution algorithm worked out by Google’s founders would become the backbone of a cultural and economic giant? “When we have a national and global scientific enterprise that is out there building

terrain...that can become fertile ground on which all kinds of applications can grow.”

AAAS has been instrumental in building this terrain through international science initiatives, and Press said that continued support for these programs is a critical counterbalance against the notion that global collaborations are a “luxury rather than an economic necessity.”

U.S. graduate school programs still attract researchers from around the world, he noted, but PCAST, AAAS, and others are now offering ideas about improving undergraduate science education. “We need to admit that we’re not doing a good job in those first 2 years” of undergraduate study, he said. “People aren’t going to be attracted to science by a freshman course in which they’re just going to be sitting in a large lecture hall. But they are attracted when we can get them out into research laboratories and they see what research really is.”

Press cited several polls showing that the American public remains committed to science and sees scientists as trustworthy and prestigious citizens. With this in mind, he thinks voters will be very interested to hear what the 2012 presidential candidates have to say about their own plans for science.

“There’s a broad segment of the American public that’s interested in science and innovation, both the beauty and benefits of it,” he said. “One of our goals should be to find ways to allow those things to move forward, and not have them brought down by things we can’t agree on.” —Becky Ham

AAAS

Call for Nomination of 2012 Fellows

AAAS Fellows who are current members of the association are invited to nominate members for election as Fellows. A Fellow is defined as a member “whose efforts on behalf of the advancement of science or its applications are scientifically or socially distinguished.” A nomination must be sponsored by three AAAS Fellows (who are current in their membership), two of whom must have no affiliation with the nominee’s institution.

Nominations undergo review by the steering groups of the association’s sections



William H. Press

(the chair, chair-elect, retiring chair, secretary, and four members-at-large of each section). Each steering group reviews only those nominations designated for its section. Names of Fellow nominees who are approved by the steering groups are presented to the AAAS Council for election.

Nominations with complete documentation must be received by 11 April 2012. Nominations received after that date or nominations that are incomplete as of the deadline will not move forward, but may upon request be held for the following year. Complete instructions and a copy of the

nomination form are available at www.aaas.org/aboutaaas/fellows/instructions.shtml. To request a hard copy of the nomination form, please contact the AAAS Executive Office, 1200 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC, 20005, USA; at 202-326-6468; or at kobrien@aaas.org.



Pacific Rim S&T. The AAAS Annual Meeting will convene for the first time in Vancouver, British Columbia.

ANNUAL MEETING

Solving Challenges by “Flattening the World”

It is a question that frames the 21st-century scientific enterprise: As the world population moves toward 9 billion, will it be possible to provide food, water, and energy for everyone without dangerously depleting natural resources and damaging the environment? These challenges will be the focus of the 178th AAAS Annual Meeting, which convenes from 16 to 20 February in Vancouver, British Columbia.

The meeting will feature top scientists, engineers, educators, policy-makers, and science journalists from some 50 nations and a full spectrum of disciplines. More than 170 plenary addresses,

lectures, seminars, and symposia are scheduled under the theme “Flattening the World: Building the Global Knowledge Society.”

“The theme...is intended to focus the program on the complex, interconnected challenges of the 21st century and on pathways to global solutions through international, multidisciplinary efforts,” said AAAS President Nina V. Fedoroff in her letter of invitation.

The program will be rich and ambitious: Among the daily plenary events will be a panel of influential journalists and scientists—including NASA climate expert James Hansen—discuss-

ing the challenges of communicating climate change, and an address by Ismail Serageldin, the eminent director of the Library of Alexandria, Egypt, on “Science and Democracy.”

Some of the world’s leading experts will offer topical lectures on water security, the science of science education, international science collaboration, molecular motors, and other issues. Sessions in the seminar “Unlocking Biology’s Potential” will look at predictive medicine and delivering on the promise of the Human Genome Project.

2012 marks the first AAAS Annual Meeting in Vancouver—there have been seven other meetings in Canada, starting with Montreal in 1857—and this one will have a strong focus on Canada, the Arctic, and the northeastern Pacific Ocean. A full-day seminar will focus on climate change in the northern latitudes. And among many Canadian speakers at the meeting will be Mike Lazaridis, president and co-CEO of Research In Motion and founder/chairman of Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics, whose plenary address will explore “The Power of Ideas.”

For registration and program information, see www.aaas.org/meetings. The site <http://news.aaas.org> will serve as a portal for Annual Meeting news from *ScienceNow*, *Science Update*, www.aaas.org, AAAS MemberCentral, and EurekAlert! The AAAS Facebook page and Twitter (#AAASmtg) also will feature news from Vancouver.

COMMUNICATION

AAAS, Kavli Name Science Journalism Award Winners

Stories on the potential impact of climate change in two localities and on the secret lives of scientists and engineers are among the winners of the 2011 AAAS Kavli Science Journalism Awards.

Large Newspaper—(Circulation $\geq 100,000$): Mark Johnson and Kathleen Gallagher, Milwaukee *Journal Sentinel*, for “One in a Billion: A Boy’s Life, A Medical Mystery” (series), 19, 22, 26 December 2010.

Small Newspaper—(Circulation $< 100,000$): Christine Peterson, Kerry Huller, Wes Watson, *Casper Star-Tribune* (Wyoming), for “On Thinning Ice: A Look at Wind River Range’s Shrinking Glaciers” (series), 23 to 25 January 2011.

Magazine: Adam Rogers, *Wired*, for “The Angels’ Share,” June 2011.

Television—(Spot News/Feature Reporting, ≤ 20 minutes): Rachel Silverman, Craig Miller, Lindsay Kelliher, Linda Peckham, Amy Miller, Paul Rogers, KQED QUEST/Climate Watch (San Francisco), for “Going Up: Sea Level Rise in San Francisco Bay,” 31 August 2010.

Television—(In-Depth Reporting, > 20 minutes): Two winning entries: Richard Burke-Ward, Robert Strange, Callum Macrae, Stuart Carter, Howard Swartz, WGBH/NOVA, for “Japan’s Killer Quake,” 30 March 2011.

Mark J. Davis, National Geographic Channel, for “Death of a Mars Rover,” 2 June 2011.

Radio: Gabriel Spitzer, with Michael De Bonis, WBEZ Chicago, for “Clever Apes” (series), 26 July and 24 November 2010; 24 May 2011.

Online: Joshua Seftel, Tom Miller, Susan K. Lewis, Lauren Aguirre, PBS NOVA Online, for “The Secret Life of Scientists and Engineers” (series), 6 October 2010; 2 and 16 February 2011.

Children’s Science News: Jeanne Miller, *ODYSSEY Magazine*, for “Skywalking for Science: Aloft in Redwood Space,” April 2011.

The awards, administered by AAAS since their inception in 1945, go to professional journalists for distinguished reporting for a general audience. The Kavli Foundation, based in Oxnard, California, provided a generous endowment in 2009 that ensures the future of the awards program.

Independent panels of science journalists pick the winners, who will receive \$3000 and a plaque at the 2012 AAAS Annual Meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia, in February.

—Earl Lane

Science

AAAS News and Notes

Science **335** (6067), 420-421.
DOI: 10.1126/science.335.6067.420

ARTICLE TOOLS <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/335/6067/420>

PERMISSIONS <http://www.sciencemag.org/help/reprints-and-permissions>

Use of this article is subject to the [Terms of Service](#)

Science (print ISSN 0036-8075; online ISSN 1095-9203) is published by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1200 New York Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20005. 2017 © The Authors, some rights reserved; exclusive licensee American Association for the Advancement of Science. No claim to original U.S. Government Works. The title *Science* is a registered trademark of AAAS.