

# Strength in members

A year ago on this page, I described some of the challenges that science faces in cultivating support from the society it serves. Stepping in as the new Chief Executive Officer of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS, the publisher of *Science*), my editorial asked, “Why science? Why AAAS?” My thoughts about the nature and service of science and the mission and goals of AAAS—the world’s largest general science membership organization—have since been focusing on new and revitalized efforts that will continue to make AAAS the principal voice for science. A great example of this will be the AAAS Annual Meeting next week in Washington, DC (11 to 16 February), where we will bring together diverse leading voices from around the world to discuss how “Global Science Engagement” can move society toward a secure future.

The annual meeting reflects, in many respects, how AAAS has always advanced science in the world, in countless ways, large and small: by guiding teachers, educating legislators, conducting international studies, illuminating vexing public issues, and upholding principles of fairness, openness, and reason. The organization has been doing these things for more than a century and a half, and today’s more than 100,000 members make it possible for AAAS to continue to show the public the beauty and cultural enrichment found in science, the power of evidence-based thinking, and the practicality of policies that integrate good science.

And yet, I am often struck by how few people know about the work of AAAS. Some readers of this editorial are AAAS members and may know about the important work of the organization, but probably most readers are not members, accessing *Science* through institutional subscriptions at their worksites. Even those who are members often think of themselves as subscribers only and forget that they belong to an organization that is a powerful force for science, engineering, and tech-

nology in the world. Indeed, the influence of AAAS has been potent: from helping to create the U.S. National Science Foundation soon after World War II, to forging the foundation for modern education reform; from convening the Science and Human Rights Coalition, to successfully advocating for a U.S. national forest service and the scientific management of resources; from funding the legal defense in the 1925 Scopes trial on teaching evolution, to challenging today’s politically motivated interference in research in climate change and in social and behavioral sciences, and denouncing legislated restrictions on the study of gun violence as a public health issue.

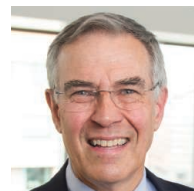
Moving forward, AAAS will continue its outspoken presence on issues of the day. We will also work with other science and engineering societies to raise the standards of the practice and application of science around the world, as well as annually place nearly 300 Ph.D.-level scientists in fellowships in various departments of the U.S. federal government. We will, with the Kavli Foundation, recognize excellence in science journalism with the most prestigious annual awards.

And through various activities, including publication of the journal *Science and Diplomacy*, AAAS will focus the world’s attention on the role that science plays in international relations.

These and other accomplishments of AAAS, too numerous to describe here, can be attributed to one important factor: its members. The numbers, strength, and wisdom of its members (many practicing scientists or engineers, many not) provide a tremendous driving force. Because AAAS values members so much, the organization is undertaking new initiatives to build, and better engage with, our network of members and fellows, so that together we can champion the mission of AAAS.

I encourage scientists and all those interested in science to join AAAS and become part of an organization that will continue to advance science for human welfare.

– Rush Holt



Rush Holt is Chief Executive Officer of AAAS and Executive Publisher of *Science*. E-mail: [rholt@aaas.org](mailto:rholt@aaas.org)



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