



OUR GOALS

ENHANCE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN SCIENCE AND ITS APPLICATIONS

As science becomes increasingly global in character, scientists are more and more likely to reach across national borders in their search for collaborators. At the same time, science and technology are being asked to play a crucial role in addressing the social and economic ills that affect hundreds of millions of people.

The growing awareness that individual nations cannot alone take on challenges to environmental and physical health has led AAAS to work with national governments and international organizations such as the World Bank and the United Nations to seek international solutions. A response to these needs requires the creation of a solid scientific infrastructure in developing countries, as well as the proliferation of a culture of science worldwide—among residents of every country and their leaders.

TO FURTHER SUCH EFFORTS, AAAS WORKS TO:

Promote International Cooperation Among Scientists

AAAS encourages international study for young scientists, as well international collaborations through workshops, grant programs and its annual meeting, making it possible for scientists from many countries to find forums for their ideas, and to see those ideas widely disseminated.

Help Build Scientific Infrastructure in Developing Countries

AAAS works to help developing countries through collaborative projects, workshops and training. Also, through education reform and other efforts, AAAS encourages the development of a culture of science worldwide.

Improve the Quality of Scientific Input in International Discourse

Recognizing the need for improved knowledge about scientific issues, AAAS has established training programs and built on relationships with governmental and non-governmental organizations such as NATO, the European Union, UNESCO, and the Organization of American States, to address collaboratively critical issues in sustainable development and international security.

STRATEGIES IN ACTION

The following are among the recent and ongoing activities of AAAS in 2001 that demonstrate its commitment to enhance international scientific cooperation:

U.S. Diplomats Educated About Science and Science Policy

“The whole area of environment, technology, and health is becoming a really big priority for us—much more than 10, or even 5 years ago,” says Lisa Fox, director of the Economic and Commercial Studies Division for the Foreign Service Institute (FSI). “We’d like to train all our officers in it, beginning with junior officers all the way up to the ambassadors.”

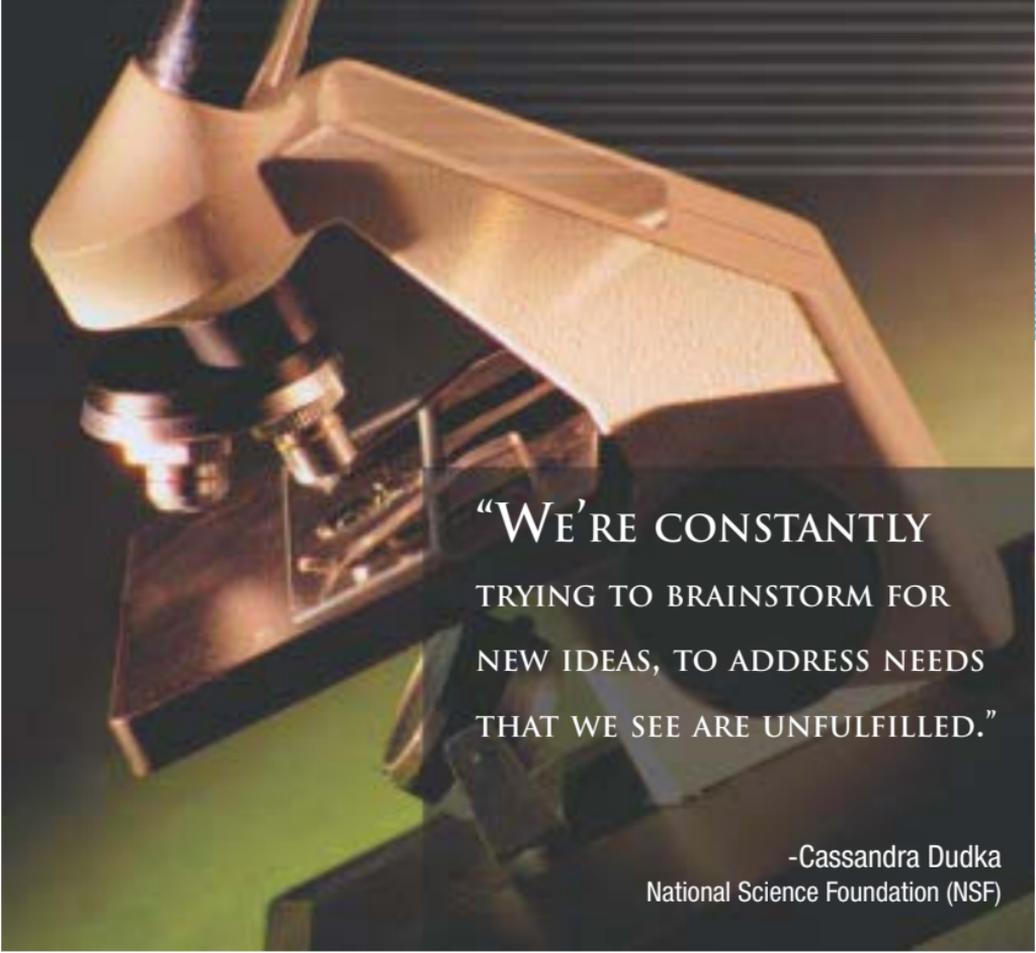
In 2001, AAAS was chosen to plan and implement two week-long FSI programs for employees of the U.S. State Department, most of whom were being assigned to their first science-related posts. The courses focused on discussions of health and population, emerging and infectious diseases, food safety, climate change, sustainable development, biodiversity, and science, technology and commerce. They went well, and AAAS staff has been asked to conduct a second series of workshops in 2002.

Brett Pomainville, a policy coordinator who attended the course in June, and is preparing for a summit on sustainable development in Johannesburg in September 2002, notes that science was once almost an afterthought at the State Department. He says his colleagues are increasingly aware that they have a lot to learn about the technical aspects of situations that arise in their work.

“It’s a struggle for us. But part of a diplomat’s job is to learn things quickly and to know who the people are who understand things in depth, and when to call on them for help,” Pomainville says.

Fostering Sustainable Development

In pilot projects in the La Plata Basin in South America and the Kola Peninsula in Russia, AAAS-sponsored researchers are exploring the interaction between human inhabitants and the natural environment in which they live. Two other projects, one in the Niger Delta in West Africa and one in the Mekong River in Southeast Asia are in the early stages of development. The AAAS Ecosystem Dynamics and Essential Human Needs (EDEHN) program has targeted the four watershed regions for an integrated multi-disciplinary approach to environmental management.



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-Cassandra Dudka
National Science Foundation (NSF)

The sprawling La Plata Basin, one of the world’s largest food producers, spans parts of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, and drives much of the economy of South America. But, recent agrarian expansions and agricultural development have become a potential threat to the ecosystem.

The Kola Peninsula is one of the most populated and polluted regions in the Arctic. AAAS, the Institute for Ecological Economics at the University of Maryland, and the Kola Science Center in Apatity, Russia are working on a multi-year US-Russian research effort to explore ways to improve the health of the damaged ecosystem.

International Collaborations for Women Scientists

Launched in 2001, the AAAS Women’s International Science Collaboration program, or WISC, is designed to give women researchers opportunities in international scientific research. The program provides women scientists in the United States with funds for planning research projects with a collaborator from a partner country.

The program initially focused on Central and Eastern Europe, but has recently expanded to most other regions of the world. The expanded program completed its first round of grantmaking in April 2002. A key requirement is that the applicants do not already have NSF funding for their proposed research. Their preparatory projects should then lead to full research proposals, to be submitted to the NSF or other funders.

“We’re constantly trying to brainstorm for new ideas, to address needs that we see are unfulfilled, says Cassandra Dudka, Program Manager for Central and Eastern Europe Programs at the National Science Foundation, which funds the program.”