



SUMMARY OF THE NATIONAL SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL CONFERENCE ON
BUILDING BRIDGES ACROSS THE
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY ENTERPRISE

Product of
THE WHITE HOUSE
OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY

June 2019

Summary of the 2019 NSTC Conference *Building Bridges Across the S&T Enterprise*

Background

On June 13 and 14, 2019, The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) held a first-of-its-kind National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) Conference on *Building Bridges Across the Science and Technology Enterprise*. The conference convened over 300 attendees from inside and outside of government at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Natcher Conference Center in Bethesda, Maryland, to share best practices and identify opportunities for collaboration.

Among the goals of the NSTC Conference was to convene the interagency community to address pressing issues in the Federal science and technology (S&T) enterprise. Conference participants discussed strategies for making effective portfolio management decisions, leveraging resources to ensure that Federally-funded research and development (R&D) is accessible for public benefit and defining best practices in building the best evidence to assess the government's return on R&D investments.

Over two days, conference attendees participated in plenaries and three parallel sessions made up of 14 topic panels. Panels focused on topics such as long-term strategic planning for R&D infrastructure, reducing administrative burdens, broadening access for Federally-funded research, creating innovative partnerships, improving stewardship of scientific collections, and building evidence to evaluate impacts of R&D investments. Half of the conference attendees were members of one or more NSTC interagency groups.

NSTC Executive Director Chloé Kontos and Dr. Jennifer Shieh, OSTP Assistant Director of Entrepreneurship, kicked off the conference. Attendees heard keynote addresses from OSTP Director Dr. Kelvin Droegemeier, National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST) Director Dr. Walter Copan, and Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Science Director Dr. Chris Fall.

During his remarks, Dr. Droegemeier stated, "One of the extraordinary opportunities we have today is to come together and figure out how to make connections and build partnerships. We in The White House don't have all the answers. The people in academia don't have all the answers. The Federal agencies don't have all the answers. But, when we bring together all those folks, we will find the answers."

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Photo Courtesy of Twitter @WHOSTP

Additional speakers and attendees represented the following Federal agencies: the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Department of Defense (DOD), Department of Transportation (DOT), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), National Science Foundation (NSF), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and numerous national laboratories. Speakers and attendees also included non-profit organizations, academic institutions, and international organizations.



Lunch Networking Topic Tables (left) and NSTC Subcommittee members in discussion with other attendees (right). Photos Courtesy of Laurie Dacus

The Federal S&T enterprise is responsible for ensuring that the outcomes of R&D benefit the American people and fulfill critical missions. The NSTC Conference provided an opportunity for the Federal S&T enterprise to ‘build bridges’ and to identify resources and strategies across agencies that could improve their planning and stewardship of R&D investments.

Summary: Conference Opening and Keynotes

NSTC Executive Director Chloé Kontos opened the conference by providing an overview of the NSTC and its role in coordinating S&T priorities and policies across the Federal government. She highlighted several successful initiatives under NSTC's coordination offices and committees, including the development of strategies and action plans for STEM education, national near earth object preparedness, and space weather. Ms. Kontos emphasized the importance of agency input and deliberation in the policymaking process as well as in the development of strategic directions and action-oriented S&T plans for the Nation. She led a discussion with panelists from NIH, NIST, NSF, and the Smithsonian Institution on ongoing challenges and needs for interagency coordination as well as ways their agencies are making progress through their participation in NSTC Subcommittees.

- **Dr. Kelvin Droegemeier** discussed the Federal Government's role in building science for the Nation alongside private sector companies, nonprofit organizations, and academic institutions. He highlighted the importance of research underpinned by American values, including open discourse, debate, and access, honesty, integrity, and civility. He also discussed a new [Joint Committee effort](#) under the NSTC to address issues in administrative burdens on researchers; rigor and integrity in research; safe and inclusive research settings; and protecting American research assets.
- **Dr. Walter Copan** remarked on the importance of creating value through R&D partnerships to drive innovation and develop inventions that can become a starting point for industrial ideas that spur economic growth. He discussed the need for the United States to maintain leadership and competitiveness globally. He reviewed highlights from the [NIST Green Paper](#), which describes stakeholder input on reforms to improve technology transfer and advance technologies from the laboratory to the market.
- **Dr. Chris Fall** highlighted the DOE National Laboratories as amazing places for innovation. He noted how various NSTC Subcommittees are supporting improvement in R&D stewardship across laboratories, such as in coordination of infrastructure and open access, and through sharing of best practices and engagement with interagency stakeholders.

Key Takeaways from Panels and Parallel Sessions

The NSTC Conference speakers across panels and parallel sessions focused on:

- **Making strategic investments for R&D resources.** Attendees agreed on the importance of input from the broad S&T community to determine long-term R&D priorities. It is critical to continue to strengthen engagement within the scientific community as well as between the community and policymakers regarding R&D strategic planning, coordination, and implementation.
- **Promoting access to R&D resources.** Speakers discussed their efforts to make Federally-funded scientific findings and resources public and open while also balancing privacy and security. Interoperability of data management systems and data quality were discussed as key challenges that require engagement and agreed-upon principles across Federal and non-Federal S&T communities. Speakers identified practices from the private sector to better communicate and make available Federally-supported R&D resources and technologies to broader S&T enterprise communities.
- **Measuring, understanding, and communicating returns on R&D investments.** Discussion focused on how agencies build evidence to determine whether they are achieving their missions. Speakers discussed strategies to define successful outcomes as well as track, report, and communicate the people impacted by, outputs from, and outcomes of R&D investments. Measuring success is key for managing performance, progress, and accountability.

Next Steps and Conclusions

Through the NSTC Conference, attendees identified opportunities, best practices, and strategies to leverage R&D resources across agencies. These activities align with the Trump Administration's [President's Management Agenda](#) in supporting various cross-agency priority goals, such as leveraging data as a strategic asset and improving technology transfer and commercialization of R&D to benefit all Americans.

The NSTC will continue to foster engagement, collaboration, and partnerships across the Federal R&D enterprise to address our Nation's greatest challenges in science and technology.

About the National Science and Technology Council

The NSTC was established by Executive Order on November 23, 1993. This Cabinet-level Council is the principal means within the Executive Branch to coordinate science and technology policy across the diverse entities that make up the Federal research and development enterprise. The Office of Science and Technology Policy Director serves in the President's shoes as the Chair of the Council and provides leadership across the NSTC and interagency.

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