

White House Issues Statement on "Science in the National Interest"

At a ceremony on August 3, Vice President Al Gore released a statement outlining the Administration's national science policy. Titled *Science in the National Interest*, it is the outgrowth of many discussions, most notably the Forum on Science in the National Interest, hosted in January 1994 by the Office of Science and Technology Policy and co-sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences and 14 other scientific organizations and government agencies. The statement was approved for release after being discussed at the June 29 meeting of the full National Science and Technology Council (NSTC).

The document reaffirms the importance of basic, fundamental science fostered by "a strong commitment to investigator-initiated research and merit review by scientific peers."

"The highlight of this report is that it leaves no doubt about the critical role which fundamental research must play in achieving a more prosperous economy and better quality of life for all citizens," said George E. Brown Jr. (D-CA, and chairman of the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology).

The report further recommends an investment in fundamental research that is "commensurate with our national goals."

Critics have said, however, that any real increase in funding for basic research will be hard to come by, given tight budgetary times, and that the money may have to come from other federal programs.

Another Administration goal identified in the policy document is that of raising overall U.S. investment in nondefense R&D to 3% of the nation's gross domestic product to match levels in Germany and Japan.

The document is a statement of principles rather than a list of specific actions, but it does identify five broad goals:

- Maintain leadership across the frontiers of scientific knowledge;
- Enhance connections between fundamental research and national goals;
- Stimulate partnerships that promote investments in fundamental science and engineering and effective use of physical, human, and financial resources;
- Produce the finest scientists and engineers for the 21st century; and
- Raise the scientific and technological literacy of all Americans.

Underlying these goals is a reiterated theme—pushing back the frontiers of scientific knowledge will produce unanticipated benefits.

Several actions are proposed for each goal, with the NSTC slated for a prominent role. To maintain leadership, the

document recommends that the NSTC and PCAST provide an ongoing evaluation of the U.S. research portfolio and the physical infrastructure needed for research.

Enhancing connections between fundamental research and national goals would also involve NSTC coordination and review. To stimulate industry-university-government partnerships, the federal government can "foster the conditions that stimulate private sector investments in fundamental research" and in research facilities. The conditions would include predictable government policies and regulations.

To produce quality scientists and engineers, the document recommends maintaining the excellence of the higher education system, suggesting mentoring, role models, and awards.

The vehicle for raising U.S. scientific and technical literacy rests on an initiative the Administration calls "Goals 2000: Educate America." The initiative calls for systematic reform of elementary and secondary education and demonstrated competency in math and science by all students. Implementation will be a state responsibility.

Science in the National Interest is interspersed with examples of scientific discoveries that illustrate the synergy of science and technology and show how innovations in science have affected the economy and the quality of life. Among the examples are buckyballs, simulations and computational studies, and light-emitting diodes.

PCAST Membership Announced

Along with the presentation of the Administration's statement on science policy came the announcement of 18 appointments to the rechartered President's Committee of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST).

"To achieve our goals, we must strengthen partnerships with industry, with state and local governments, and with schools, colleges, and universities across the country," said President Clinton in a written statement announcing the appointments. "My goal for this committee is to help encourage those partnerships."

PCAST will be chaired by John H. Gibbons, assistant to the president for science and technology, and by John A. Young, former president and CEO of Hewlett-Packard. Gibbons described PCAST as a "formal channel for private-sector advice" to the NSTC and as a way to ensure the inclusion of private-sector views in the policymaking process. □

President's Committee of Advisors on Science and Technology

Chairs

John H. Gibbons – Assistant to the President for Science and Technology; Director, Office of Science and Technology Policy

John A. Young – Former President and CEO, Hewlett-Packard Co.

Members

Norman R. Augustine – Chairman and CEO, Martin Marietta Corporation

Francisco J. Ayala – Donald Bren Professor of Biological Sciences; Professor of Philosophy, University of California, Irvine

Murray Gell-Mann – Professor, Santa Fe Institute; Millikan Professor Emeritus of Theoretical Physics, California Institute of Technology

David A. Hamburg – President, Carnegie Corporation of New York

John P. Holdren – Class of 1935 Professor of Energy, University of California, Berkeley

Diana MacArthur – Chair and CEO, Dynamac Corporation

Shirley M. Malcom – Head, Directorate for Education and Human Resources Programs, AAAS

Mario J. Molina – Lee and Geraldine Martin Professor of Environmental Sciences, MIT

Peter H. Raven – Director, Missouri Botanical Garden; Englemann Professor of Botany, Washington University in St. Louis

Sally K. Ride – Director, California Space Institute; Professor of Physics, University of California, San Diego

Judith Rodin – President, University of Pennsylvania

Charles A. Sanders – Chairman and CEO, Glaxo Inc.

Phillip A. Sharp – Professor of Biology; Head, Department of Biology, MIT

David E. Shaw – CEO, D.E. Shaw and Co.

Charles M. Vest – President, MIT

Virginia V. Weldon – Senior Vice President for Public Policy, Monsanto Company

Lilian Shiao-Yen Wu – Member, Research Staff, IBM T.J. Watson Research Center