Director's Matters

By H. Frederick Dylla, Executive Director & CEO

Time exposed for science

Young minds by nature are inquisitive, and exposure to the mysteries of science often sparks the desire to learn. Certainly the dawn of the “space age” had a significant influence for my generation, then in grammar school—we could almost glimpse our future with the first satellite launch. Yet, almost equally influential to sustaining interest in science at the time was the nation’s increasing support for science, both in terms of funding research and improving science and engineering education.

What followed were decades of science proliferation, both public and private. For example, America’s blue-chip companies displayed their R&D prowess at the 1964 World’s Fair, and those same companies sponsored visits to corporate laboratories for promising high school students. The National Science Foundation sponsored summer-long science camps at more than 1000 college campuses, and I was fortunate to participate. There were ample activities such as these that supplemented my formal precollege education. With the increasing globalization of industry in the 1970s and the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s, however, the nation’s ability to provide what had seemed a boundless and energetic support of science seemed to wane for all but biomedicine. Since the golden age of the post-Sputnik era, there have been many, not wholly successful, attempts to revive this apolitical spirit.

But regardless of the time in which we grew up, nature itself exposes us to mysteries that beg to be uncovered—we only have to look at the rocks beneath our feet. Okay, bedrock that may be exposed at the side of a road or pebbles at a river’s edge may seem lackluster at first glance, but with a little bit of persistence in exploring, a whole world of color and structure enfolds. For me, it was what I picked up off the ground that really ignited my interest in science

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NSF grant for longitudinal study

Working with the Demographics Committee of the American Astronomical Society (AAS), the AIP Statistical Research Center (SRC) is conducting a longitudinal survey of everyone who was a graduate student in astronomy or astrophysics during the 2006–07 academic year. The Longitudinal Study of Astronomy Graduate Students was first conceived as one of the recommendations from the 2003 Conference on Women in Astronomy. In addition to looking for evidence of gender differences, the survey will provide detailed data on employment patterns in astronomy.

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Member Society Spotlight

AIP engages at the APS April Meeting

*Communicating science.* Earlier this month, AIP media services teamed up with APS’ media relations department to run the press room at the APS April Meeting 2014 in Savannah, GA. Staff webcast 13 press briefings in three days for an international audience of reporters, including one radio journalist from Germany. Topics included the ongoing quest to identify dark matter; extreme energy and Elon Musk’s hyperloop; how stars explode and galaxies form; stories of famous physicists in an anniversary year; and the latest results from three experiments: BICEP2, BOSS, and IceCube. Recordings of the press briefings are available on the APS website.

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Coming Up

April 29

• Individual TIAA Counseling Sessions (Melville)

April 30

• Individual TIAA Counseling Sessions (College Park)

May 1

• ACP Blood Drive (College Park)
  • Individual TIAA Counseling Sessions (College Park)

May 5-9

• ASA 167th Meeting (Providence, RI)

May 7

• Lyne Trimble Science Heritage Lecture given by David Cassidy: A reading from the play “Farm Hall” (Santa Fe, NM)

May 13

• AIP Publishing Board of Managers meeting (New York, NY)

May 14

• May birthday socials (College Park and Melville)

May 24-28

• ACA Annual Meeting (Albuquerque, NM)

May 28

• SPS Interns first day (College Park)