

National Academies Eric and Wendy Schmidt Awards for Excellence in Science Communications

Committee

Megan L. Ranney

Chair

Dr. Megan L. Ranney is an emergency physician, researcher, and national advocate for innovative approaches to public health. In July 2023, she joined Yale University as Dean of the Yale School of Public Health, where she is also the C.-E. A. Winslow Professor of Public Health. Her research focuses on developing, testing, and disseminating digital health interventions to prevent violence and related behavioral health problems, and on COVID-related risk reduction. She has held multiple national leadership roles, including as co-founder of GetUsPPE during the COVID-19 pandemic and Senior Strategic Advisor to AFFIRM at the Aspen Institute, focused on ending gun violence through a non-partisan public health approach. She was previously the Warren Alpert Endowed Professor of Emergency Medicine, Deputy Dean of the School of Public Health, and Founding Director of the Brown-Lifespan Center for Digital Health at Brown University. She is an elected member of the National Academy of Medicine, a Fellow of the Aspen Health Innovators' Fellowship, and a member of the Aspen Global Leadership Network. She earned her bachelor's degree in history of science, graduating summa cum laude, from Harvard University; her medical doctorate, graduating Alpha Omega Alpha, from Columbia University; and her master's degree in public health from Brown University. She completed her residency in Emergency Medicine and a fellowship in Injury Prevention Research at Brown University.

Tim Appenzeller

Member

Tim Appenzeller leads Science's award-winning news section and supervises its global team of staff and freelance writers and editors. He has spent 40 years as an editor and writer specializing in science and the environment for magazines including Scientific American, U.S. News & World Report, and National Geographic. His National Geographic article "The Case of the Missing Carbon" won the Walter Sullivan award for excellence in science journalism in 2005, and his June 2007 National Geographic cover story on global warming, "The Big Thaw," shared an award for best explanatory reporting from the Society of Environmental Journalists. Appenzeller was Science's Features Editor during the 1990s, and most recently was Chief Magazine Editor at Nature, responsible for its journalism and opinion.

David Biello

Member

David Biello is the curator for TED Countdown, helping amplify solutions to global warming, accelerate action against climate change, and change the narrative around this crisis from doom and despair to realistic hope. Prior to that, he served as science curator at TED, working on talks featuring ideas from astronomy to zoology, including using gene drives to combat malaria, the mRNA revolution in vaccines, and the real impacts of sexual health restrictions. As part of his duties, he has helped judge and prepare finalists for TED's Audacious Project, a philanthropic effort to pair compelling ideas with the funds to make an impact, including harnessing AI to develop new antibiotics and how to reduce vaccine spoilage. Prior to joining TED, he has been an award-winning journalist, reporting on the environment and energy since 1999—long enough to be cynical but not long enough to be depressed. He wrote for outlets ranging from Scientific American to The New York Times. He also hosted the duPont-Columbia award-winning documentary *Beyond the Light Switch* as well as *The Ethanol Effect* for PBS. And he is the author of the book *The Unnatural World: The Race to Remake Civilization in Earth's Newest Age*, an Editor's Pick of The New York Times Book Review. He received a BA in English from Wesleyan University and a MS in Journalism from Columbia University. He currently lives with his daughter and son between a Olmsted-designed park and a world-famous graveyard in Brooklyn.

Erika Check Hayden

Member

Erika Check Hayden is a San Francisco-based journalist and director of the Science Communication Program at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Erika was a reporter at the science journal *Nature* for 15 years, where she covered biomedical research, specializing in genetics, infectious disease, and science in Silicon Valley, and won multiple awards, including for her work on the 2014 Ebola epidemic. She now writes for a variety of publications. She began her career at *Newsweek* magazine in New York.

Chris Crawford

Member

Dr. Chris S. Crawford is an Assistant Professor at the University of Alabama's Department of Computer Science. He directs the Human-Technology Interaction Lab (HTIL). His research focuses on human-robot interaction and Brain-Computer Interfaces (BCIs). He has investigated systems that provide computer applications and robots with information about a user's cognitive state. He previously developed a brain-drone racing system that was featured on over 800 news outlets including *Discovery*, *USA Today*, and the *New York Times*, and *Forbes*. Along with investigating brain-robot interaction applications, Dr. Crawford also developed *Neuroblock*, a tool designed to engage K-12 student in neurofeedback applications development. He recently won a NSF CAREER award for his research.

Beth Daley

Member

Beth runs The Conversation, a national media outlet that unlocks research expertise for the public through journalism. A longtime Boston Globe climate reporter, Beth also worked at the New England Center for Investigative Reporting as a reporter and director of partnerships. As Director of Strategic Development at InsideClimate, she worked to diversify the Pulitzer Prize-winning news outlet's revenue stream. She attended Stanford University as a John S. Knight Journalism Fellow in 2011/2012 and was a Pulitzer finalist for her climate coverage in 2008.

Nadia Drake

Member

Nadia Drake is a science journalist who specializes in covering space exploration and the search for life beyond Earth. For many years, she was a contributing writer with National Geographic; most recently, she was the interim physics editor at Quanta Magazine, and she has written for numerous publications including Nature, The New York Times, Science News, and Scientific American. She holds a PhD in genetics from Cornell University and a graduate certificate in science communication from UCSC.

Laura Helmuth

Member

Laura Helmuth is a freelance science editor, writer, and consultant with experience across a range of publications. She is the former editor in chief of Scientific American and a past president of the National Association of Science Writers. She has been an editor for The Washington Post, National Geographic, Slate, Smithsonian, and Science magazines. She served on the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's standing committee on the science of science communication. She currently serves on the advisory boards of SciLine, The Transmitter, and 500 Women Scientists. She is a past board member of High Country News, Society for Science, and The Open Notebook. She was named a Friend of Darwin by the National Center for Science Education. She has a Ph.D. in cognitive neuroscience from the University of California, Berkeley. She is a birder and is active on the social media platform Bluesky at @laurahelmuth.bsky.social.

Ronald M. Latanision

Member

Ronald M. Latanision is an American materials scientist, corrosion engineer, academic and businessman. He is an emeritus professor of materials science and engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the Neil Armstrong Distinguished Visiting professor at Purdue University, and serves as a senior fellow at Exponent, where he also served as a corporate vice president. Latanision served as co-editor-in-chief of Corrosion Reviews and is the editor-in-chief of the NAE Quarterly, The Bridge. He acted as a member of the International Corrosion Council, is a member of the NAE, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and holds the title of Fellow at NACE International, and ASM International.

Moira Shourie

Member

Moira is the executive director of Los Angeles based Zócalo Public Square, a unit of ASU Media Enterprise. Previously, she was an executive at MTV Networks International and Outlook magazine, among India's most widely read news magazines. She is a graduate of St. Stephen's College, Delhi, Emerson College, Boston, and a Sulzberger Fellow at Columbia Graduate School of Journalism. Moira is a board member at New America and on the board of governors at the Japanese American National Museum

Janelle Wellons

Member

When Janelle Wellons graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with a B.S. in Aerospace Engineering, she had no idea that it would spark the beginning of a career operating science instruments and spacecraft at the Moon, Saturn, and our own planet Earth. She is currently a Senior Mission Operations Engineer at ispace, inc., leading routine and critical space operations from the HAKUTO-R Mission Control Center as a Flight Director for the companies' lunar lander missions. Previously, Janelle worked at the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory on the Earth observing MAIA, Sentinel-6, and SWOT missions as well as the Cassini mission to Saturn and Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter. Speaking to students about pursuing careers in space has been a constant throughout her career and she has been grateful to share her message through features by PBS SciGirls, Nike, Lego, and more. At JPL she was awarded the Bruce Murray Award for "inspiring students to engage in STEM, quenching their thirst for knowledge, and sparking a curiosity greater than the stars in the sky." When she isn't on-call to operate robots in space, you can find her exploring her new home in Japan and doing outreach for communities traditionally underrepresented in STEM.