

## 2(b). President’s Perspective

Since our last report in March 2011, here are some projects and activities that continue to move our strategic plan forward:

### Related to Scientific Leadership and Collaboration

*The American Geophysical Union is a leader, collaborator, and sought after partner for scientific innovation, rigor and interdisciplinary focus on global issues.*

- At the March Board Meeting, we adopted a policy on establishing, maintaining, and evaluating relationships with other organizations; subsequently we developed a decision tree with entry points for staff, Council and Board. At the low risk, low financial outlay end of the spectrum, staff is delegated responsibility; at the opposite end of the risk/finances spectrum, Council, Board and staff all need to be involved. A first exercise of this decision tree came with staff developing a 1-page MOU with the Soil Science Society of America in July to promote areas of mutual interest in Earth science.
- Chris McEntee and I signed an MOU with the European Geosciences Union in April at the EGU General Assembly in Vienna. This MOU is the culmination of a long and fruitful dialogue with EGU about ways that we can work together productively in meetings, outreach, publications, and other areas of overlapping interest. We have discussed a conference on Natural Hazards as one possible initial joint effort.
- I gave an invited presentation on AGU science and our new organizational structure at the semi-annual board meeting of the American Institute of Physics in March in College Park, MD. Based on that presentation, the executive director of the American Society of Acoustics (an AIP Board member) invited me to give the same presentation at the ASA annual meeting in May in Seattle. Both AIP and ASA are interested in learning from the lessons of AGU’s recent organizational transformation and were impressed by the positive changes we have made in such a short period of time.

### Related to Science and Society

*The American Geophysical Union engages members, shapes policy, and informs society about the excitement of Earth and space science and its role in developing solutions for the sustainability of the planet.*

- On the recommendation of the Honors and Recognition Committee and the CLT, the executive committee of the Board approved a new AGU Climate Communication Prize. This new prize is funded by Nature’s Own to honor an AGU member-scientist for the communication of climate

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science. The prize celebrates those who promote scientific literacy and foster respect and understanding of science-based values as they relate to climate change. The prize will be awarded annually and will be presented at AGU’s Fall Meeting. It will carry a cash award of \$25,000.

- Chris and I gave a presentation in July at the Council of Engineering and Scientific Society Executives (CESSE) in Vancouver BC in a session entitled “How to get your leadership invested in & involved in Public Affairs.” The presentation covered background on AGU’s governance transformation, formulation of our new strategic plan with a major focus on Science and Society, and specifics of how we have pursued our goals under the Science and Society theme. We emphasized the importance of member involvement in helping to set tone and direction.
- Since the last Board meeting in March, we submitted letters to the editor to the Washington Post on the value of NOAA satellites, to the New York Times on scientific integrity (not published), and to Forbes magazine on funding for climate research (<http://blogs.forbes.com/larrybell/2011/07/26/>). We issued a statement in the wake of the House Science, Space and Technology Committee hearing April 1 to consider proposed EPA regulations for greenhouse gas CO2 emissions under the Clean Air Act. Most of the witnesses were climate change skeptics; we refuted their misleading testimony on the state of the science and community consensus about it. In July, we submitted a letter in support of federal employees serving on the boards of outside organizations to the Office of Government Ethics and issued a press release endorsing the draft scientific integrity guidelines issued by NOAA. In August in the wake of hurricane Irene, I was interviewed by Swiss National Radio on the value of NOAA satellites. We are working to reduce time for issuing public communications related to breaking news stories and are under 24 hours in most cases.
- Chris and I visited the office of Representative Jay Inslee (D-WA) after the Board Meeting in March. He expressed his concern about the urgency of the climate change issue and encouraged AGU to be pro-active in the public debate about it. As a principal author of the 2006 Tsunami Warning and Education Act, he was also very interested to learn about the success of the U.S. Tsunami Observation and Forecast System performed during the March 11, 2011 Japanese tsunami.
- We received a petition signed by 75 climate scientists requesting that AGU respond to attacks against climate science and climate scientists in Congress, the media and on web blogs. In deliberating this request, we realized that AGU does not have position statement supporting academic freedom. Consequently, the Council at its August meeting adopted the current statement on academic freedom issued by the American Meteorology.
- AGU together with the Union of Concerned Scientists, the American Association of University Professors and Climate Science Watch wrote a letter to the President of the University of Virginia on August 10 urging her to protect the privacy of climate researchers in the name of academic freedom in appropriately responding to a Freedom of Information Act request from the conservative

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American Tradition Institute. The President of UVA has promised to respond to this letter. Background on this issue can be found at [http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/virginia-politics/post/groups-concerned-uva-will-turn-over-documents-in-global-warming-case/2011/08/11/gIQAUXeu8I\\_blog.html#pagebreak](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/virginia-politics/post/groups-concerned-uva-will-turn-over-documents-in-global-warming-case/2011/08/11/gIQAUXeu8I_blog.html#pagebreak)

- I gave a presentation invited by the student run *Forum on Science Ethics and Policy* at the University of Washington in April. The presentation was based in part on outcomes from the AGU-led Climate Communications Summit held at the Pew Center last March. Many AGU members in the audience were pleased about the directions we are taking in being more proactive about climate change science communications.
- Simon Winchester, popular science writer, will give a keynote lecture at this year’s Fall AGU inaugural “President’s Forum”. He was selected from a shortlist of 5 candidates in consultation with the Fall Meeting Program Committee. Announcement of his lecture has generated spirited discussion among segments of the membership.

**Related to Organizational Excellence**

*As a scientific society, the American Geophysical Union operates within a new business model that is sustainable, transparent, and inclusive in ways that are responsive to members and stakeholders.*

- We have retained Quatt Associates, a professional management consulting firm, to guide the Board through the process of CEO evaluation, compensation adjustment, and goal setting for the next year. This is the most thorough CEO evaluation process that AGU has ever engaged in and we intend to use this year’s process as a template for future annual evaluations. We are making this effort both to follow best practices for nonprofit associations and to protect ourselves legally in making adjustments to the CEO compensation package. This process began in July and involved a CEO self-evaluation, a review by individual board and CLT members, a comparative analysis of other nonprofit association compensation practices, and a final decision by the Board Executive Committee. The CEO evaluation and compensation adjustment was completed in late August; in September we began the process of setting performance goals for the coming year.
- The Task Team on Scientific Ethics had its first meeting by telcon in early August and will have a face-to-face meeting at AGU HQ in October. Peter Gleick, President of the Pacific Institute for Studies in Development, Environment, and Security, is chairing the committee, which consists of 14 members from within and outside of AGU.

**Emerging Issues**

- Recent debates in Congress and the bill approved to resolve the debt ceiling crisis suggest a challenging climate for funding of scientific research in the US in the coming years. Lean science

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budgets will likely affect AGU members and have an impact on revenues from publications, meetings, development, and other areas of activity. We need to be prepared for potential effects on our revenue streams and the implications for how we provide members services.

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