

US science policy should focus on outcomes not efficiencies

February 17 2013

Given the huge investment and power of science and technology in the U.S. it is surprising that more attention isn't paid to the policy decisions that drive the enterprise, said Daniel Sarewitz, co-director of the Consortium for Science, Policy and Outcomes (CSPO) at Arizona State University. What appears to be missing from the equation, he added, is a focus on outcomes.

Sarewitz was speaking at the 2013 American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) annual meeting in Boston.

"Given the power of science and technology to shape and even transform our society, it is extraordinary how little attention is paid to improving our science and technology [policy decisions](#)," said Sarewitz. "There are different ways to think about enhancing the capacity of the science and technology enterprise to solve the problems people expect it to solve."

Sarewitz, a Fellow of AAAS and member of its Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility, spoke as part of a panel on Outcome-Oriented Research and Development Strategy, today (Feb. 17). His talk is titled: "Toward Bridging the Duality of Science: Seed-Push, Issue-Driven or 'Encounter'?"

Sarewitz, who has more than 20 years experience in science policy dating back to his time working on Capitol Hill as a staff member for former congressman George E. Brown, Jr., has written numerous articles and books on this subject. Included among these are his articles on

public value mapping with CSPO co-founder Barry Bozeman and his article "[Does Science Policy Matter?](#)" for *Issues in Science and Technology*.

"The standard ways we have of assessing science and technology efforts are not aimed at understanding the outcomes of science in society, but are aimed at maximizing the productivity," said Sarewitz. "Despite the fact that the advancement of science and the development of technology are unpredictable, we can assess whether programs are appropriately structured for delivering the societal outcomes that we expect them to accomplish. By understanding these distinctions, we can make better decisions."

Provided by Arizona State University

Citation: US science policy should focus on outcomes not efficiencies (2013, February 17) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-02-science-policy-focus-outcomes-efficiencies.html>

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