

Cover Memo: Volume 23, Issue 2, Special Issue on Civic Science for Transformative Policy Solutions to Societal Challenges

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It is with immense pleasure and a deep sense of purpose that the Rita Allen Foundation and Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Honor Society are honored to announce the publication of the co-sponsored Special Issue of Journal of Science Policy & Governance (JSPG), Volume 23, Issue 2, **Civic Science for Transformative Policy Solutions to Societal Challenges**.

Our collaborative efforts, including this Special Issue, meet at the intersections of science, technology, and democracy. In an era marked by transformative scientific breakthroughs in tandem with challenges that transcend conventional boundaries, we were eager put out this call to early-career innovators incubating new ideas, and new combinations of ideas, to advance breakthrough solutions.

In 2018, Elizabeth Christopherson and colleagues advocated for precisely such solutions in [The Civic Science Imperative](#), in which they argued that to find transformative policy solutions to societal challenges “we need to engage in and support the messy, complex work of civic discourse and negotiation.”

Building upon those ideas, in 2020, the Rita Allen Foundation launched the [Civic Science Fellows](#) program with partners to empower a network of innovators working to create transformative change in science and society. Now in its third cohort, the program connects emergent leaders across a broad spectrum of backgrounds and knowledge, and then supports them to incubate new ideas in networked organizations.

Likewise, Sigma Xi’s commitment to improving the human condition through research excellence has inspired its efforts to advance civic science. In recent years, Sigma Xi has emerged as a leader in civic science and science policy, holding [science policy bootcamps](#), hosting a Civic Science Fellow, and developing the [Civico](#) online platform, providing scientists with a one-stop shop for finding state-level science policy opportunities. Their focus on ethics and integrity in all aspects of this work further strengthens the bond between science and society.

Civic science offers a dynamic framework for addressing the complex challenges facing our world today, championing collaborative efforts between scientists and communities affected by their research. Together, we are fostering a culture of inclusive engagement and mutual benefit. By involving people across society in the design, implementation, and evaluation of research projects, civic science seeks to demonstrate that scientific knowledge is accessible and relevant to all members of society, and a fully engaged part of our democracy. In addition, civic science advances in evidence-based policymaking help decisionmakers develop more effective, informed, and equitable policies that address the root causes of societal challenges. Civic science places a strong emphasis on centering equity and social justice issues, recognizing that for science to ultimately serve society it must be conducted in a manner that inclusively and equitably serves all of us.

In this special issue, we aim to explore the multifaceted dimensions of civic science and its implications for policymaking. Through a diverse array of articles, policy briefs, and analyses, we seek to showcase the innovative approaches and real-world applications of civic science in addressing some of the most pressing challenges of our time. We are privileged to feature in this special issue contributions from a diverse range of authors and stakeholders who are leading the charge in advancing the field of civic science. From policymakers and researchers to community activists and citizen scientists, each article offers valuable insights and perspectives on how civic science can be leveraged to drive positive change in our society.

The articles in this special issue reflect the need for greater collaboration and partnership between the scientific community and other engaged actors. Whether it is collaborating with policymakers to develop evidence-based policies or partnering with community organizations to address local challenges, civic science thrives on the power of collective action and shared purpose. Moreover, many of the articles in this special issue highlight the importance of building bridges between different sectors and disciplines to tackle complex, interdisciplinary problems. Perhaps most importantly, the articles in this special issue underscore the transformative potential of civic science to create a more just, equitable, and sustainable world for future generations. By empowering people across society to actively participate in the scientific process and advocating for evidence-based policymaking, civic science offers a powerful tool for building a better future for all.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the authors, editors, reviewers, and other contributors who have helped make this special issue a reality. Your passion, dedication, and expertise are truly inspiring, and we are honored to have the opportunity to showcase your work in the pages of JSPG. And we extend special thanks to Christian Ross, former Postdoctoral Fellow in Civic Science at Tufts University Tisch College of Civic Life and *JPSG* Editor-in-Chief, for his critical role in advancing this project.

As we look to the future, let us continue to embrace the invitation of civic science to equip new generations to harness the power of science for the broader public good.

References

Christopherson, Elizabeth Good, Dietram A. Scheufele, and Brooke Smith. 2018. "The civic science imperative." *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. <https://doi.org/10.48558/6k46-1c68>

Dr. Elizabeth Good Christopherson is president and CEO of the Rita Allen Foundation, a venture philanthropy organization that invests in early-career leaders and ideas to advance pioneering biomedical research, inclusive and informed civic engagement, and a more collaborative and effective philanthropic sector. Civic science partnerships include the Civic Science Fellows program and Science in Society.

Before joining Rita Allen in 2009, Dr. Christopherson was the first female Executive Director of New Jersey's public broadcasting network (NJN). In addition, she has served on many regional and national boards, including the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), the Science Philanthropy Alliance, Science Communication Lab, Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement, and Media Impact Funders - initiating programs to broaden meaningful participation and leadership opportunities.

She is the recipient of five honorary degrees and numerous awards for public service, including the prestigious Women Who Make a Difference Award from the International Women's Forum (IWF), and has served as a jury member and chair for international media competitions, including NHK's Japan Prize.

Dr. Jamie L. Vernon is executive director and CEO at Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Honor Society and publisher of *American Scientist* magazine. From 2014 to 2017, he served as Sigma Xi's director of science

communications and publications and editor-in-chief of *American Scientist*. He was also Sigma Xi's co-director of operations from 2014 to 2015.

Prior to joining Sigma Xi, Dr. Vernon served as an Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education (ORISE) Fellow in the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) in Washington, DC, where he designed and implemented evaluation programs to measure and communicate the impacts of energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies and policies. He also co-founded a small-business incubator that supported a network of business experts to solve global energy challenges.

A molecular biologist by training, he spent more than a decade developing genetic engineering tools, designing vaccines against HIV, and studying the effects of gene duplication on evolution and development before making a career transition to science policy and communication. Currently, he is dedicated to promoting excellence in science and engineering and building public trust in the research enterprise.