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In Search of Evidence-based Science Policy: From the Endless Frontier to SciSIP

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In Search of Evidence-based Science Policy: From the Endless Frontier to SciSIP

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ABSTRACT

The federal government invests billions of dollars every year in scientific research. How to allocate this money among fields, institutions, researchers, and projects; how to nurture the talent needed to conduct research at the frontiers of science; how to assess the results of research; and how to translate those results into useful products and services answering these questions and others are the jobs of science and innovation policy.

In a 2005 speech, presidential science adviser John H. Marburger III suggested that the science policy community was not equipped with tools for such jobs and challenged it to "grow up, and quickly" so it could provide useful guides to action in our "global, technology-based society." Growing up has meant becoming more empirical, evidence-based, and, in many instances, quantitative.

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This paper tracks the evolution of U.S. science policy research largely as it has been conducted in universities and supported by the National Science Foundation, from its beginnings in the early 1960s to the present time, from reliance on expert opinion to more systematic, empirical studies. It examines how a community developed, the growth and decline of federal support, the emergence of the SciSIP (Science of Science and Innovation Policy) program and the ways in which that program has fostered new approaches to science policy. It concludes that the tools and data sets being created by program researchers can have significant impacts on policy, not just in science and technology, but in other fields as well.

Glossary of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAAS — American Association for the Advancement of Science

AEC — Atomic Energy Commission, a U.S. government agency (1947–1974) later split in two. One part was eventually incorporated into the Department of Energy, the other became the Nuclear Regulatory Commission

 ${\bf ARRA}$ — American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, commonly known as the "the Stimulus"

BCS — Division of Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences, a unit of the National Science Foundation's Directorate of Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences

BOB — Bureau of the Budget, U.S. government agency (1921–1974) renamed the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in 1974

 ${\bf CASP}$ — Catalysts for Science Policy, a student-run organization at the University of Wisconsin, Madison

COSEPP — AAAS Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy

COSEPUP — National Academy of Sciences Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy, originally COSPUP

 \mathbf{DOE} — U.S. Department of Energy, incorporated most of the non-regulatory functions of the Atomic Energy Commission

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EPP — Department of Engineering and Public Policy at Carnegie Mellon University

ESEP — Engaging Scientists and Engineers in Policy, a coalition of organizations hosted by AAAS to encourage scientists and engineers to become involved in policy

 ${\bf ERDIP}$ — Experimental R&D Incentives Program, a program run by the National Science Foundation in the mid-1970s

 ${\bf ETIP}$ — Experimental Technology Incentives Program, a program run by the National Bureau of Standards from 1972 to 1980; counterpart to ERDIP

 \mathbf{FFRDC} — Federally Funded R&D Center

 ${\bf GPRA}$ — Government Performance and Results Act, a federal law enacted in 1993, intended to improve government effectiveness

 \mathbf{GSF} — Global Science Forum of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (q.v.), originally the Megascience Forum, created in the early 1990s

GUIRR — Government–University–Industry Research Roundtable, a high-level discussion forum at the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine

IDA — Institute for Defense Analyses, a not-for-profit corporation that operates three FFRDCs, including STPI (q.v.)

IRIS — Institute for Research on Innovation and Science, a university consortium housed at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research providing an institutional home for the UMETRICS project (q.v.)

IRRPOS — Interdisciplinary Research Relating to the Problems of Society, an NSF program initiated in 1970 to expand NSF's efforts in applied research; it was soon superseded by the much larger RANN (Research Applied to National Needs) program

ITG — Interagency Task Group on the Science of Science Policy, a committee of the National Science and Technology Council that developed a "roadmap" for the Science of Science Policy MIT — Massachusetts Institute of Technology

NAS — U.S. National Academy of Sciences

 ${\bf NASA}-{\rm U.S.}$ National Aeronautics and Space Administration

NBS — National Bureau of Standards, a unit of the U.S. Commerce Department, renamed the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) in 1988

NCSES — National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, a unit of NSF, formerly Science Resources Statistics (SRS)

NIH — National Institutes of Health, an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) that supports biomedical research in both intramural and extramural programs

 ${\bf NIST}$ — National Institute of Standards and Technology, see NBS

NRC — National Research Council, operating arm of the U.S. National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine; also the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission

 ${\bf NSF}$ — National Science Foundation, principal funding agency for basic research in the United States

NSPG — National Science Policy Group, a consortium of student-led science policy clubs and organizations at U.S. universities

NSTC — National Science and Technology Council, an interagency cabinet-level council, staffed by OSTP, that coordinates science and technology policy across the major R&D agencies of the U.S. federal government

NTO — New Technology Opportunities Program, a Nixon Administration program development exercise in the early 1970s, never implemented, intended to apply technologies of the space program to earth-bound problems

OECD — Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, an intergovernmental organization of 35 industrialized countries, the purpose of which is to promote economic and social development policies 6

OMB — Office of Management and Budget, the unit of the Executive Office of the President responsible, on behalf of the President, for the federal government's budget, as well as management and regulatory issues; formerly BOB

ONR — Office of Naval Research, responsible for the U.S. Navy's science and technology programs, leading government funding agency for basic research in the early post-World War II years

OPA — Office of Planning and Assessment in NSF, absorbed the Division of Policy Research and Analysis (PRA) in 1991, dissolved in 1995

OPS — Office of Policy Support in NSF, successor to the Office of Planning and Assessment (OPA), principally engaged in fulfilling NSF's responsibilities under the Government Performance and Results Act

OST — Office of Science and Technology, part of the Executive Office of the President, succeeded the Office of the Science Adviser in 1962, abolished by President Nixon in 1973

OSTP — Office of Science and Technology Policy, key science policy institution in the U.S. federal government, established by congressional legislation in 1976; replacing the functions of OST; director of the Office is usually the Assistant to the President for Science and Technology

 \mathbf{OTA} — Congressional Office of Technology Assessment, created by Congress in 1972, "defunded" in 1995

PRA — NSF Division of Policy Research and Analysis (1977–1995)

PSAC — President's Science Advisory Committee, eliminated by President Nixon in 1973, recreated by Congress in 1976 as PCAST, the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology

RANN — NSF Program of Research Applied to National Needs (1972–1977)

 ${\bf RDA}$ — NSF R&D Assessment Program, created in 1972, succeeded by the Division of Policy Research and Analysis (PRA)

 ${\bf SBE}-{\rm NSF}$ Directorate for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences

SciSIP — NSF Program of Science of Science and Innovation Policy, if you don't know this by now you are not paying attention

 ${\bf SEPA}$ — Science and Education Policy Association, a New York City based, student-run organization

 ${\bf SEPP}$ — Science, engineering, and public policy

SES — Social and Economic Sciences, one of three divisions of the NSF Directorate for Social and Behavioral Sciences (SBE)

SPEaC — Science Policy, Education, and Communication Club, a student organization at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center

 ${\bf SPI}$ — Science Policy Initiative, a student organization at MIT

SPPSG — Science and Public Policy Studies Group, a communitybuilding organization founded in 1969 that brought together (mainly) academics interested in science policy; was absorbed by AAAS and became COSEPP, a Board committee, in 1973

SRS — NSF's statistical unit, originally Science Resources Studies, later Science Resources Statistics; subsumed by NCSES, the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, by legislation in 2010

 ${\bf SST}$ — Supersonic Transport aircraft, a government–industry collaborative project killed by Congress in 1971

STAR METRICS — "Science and Technology in America's Reinvestment — Measuring the EffecT of Research on Innovation, Competitiveness, and Science"; a project spawned by SciSIP for assessing the impact of federal R&D by drawing information from existing data from R&D institutions

STPI — Science and Technology Policy Institute, a think tank operated by the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) for OSTP and other federal agencies, originally called the Critical Technologies Institute (CTI)

 ${\bf STPO}$ — Science and Technology Policy Office, the staff office for the President's science adviser during the years when he was located in NSF (1973–1976)

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STS — Science, Technology and Society, as an academic field and an NSF program; also Science and Technology Studies

 ${\bf SUP}$ — NASA's Sustaining University Program; provided institutional support to universities for space-related research in the 1960s

THA — Technology and Human Affairs program, later a department, at Washington University in St. Louis

UMETRICS — "Universities Measuring the EffecTs of Research on Innovation, Competitiveness and Science," a project sponsored by a university coalition to measure the impacts of research in universities on innovation, competitiveness, and science using big data technology and methods

1

Introduction

One of the aims of recent science of science policy activities is to develop the evidentiary basis for decision making by policy practitioners.

— The Science of Science Policy: A Handbook¹

The annual AAAS Forum on Science and Technology Policy has been keynoted by the President's science advisor nearly every year since it originated in 1976. In most years, the science advisor has focused on R&D in the President's proposed budget for the coming fiscal year.

John H. (Jack) Marburger III, science advisor to President George W. Bush, who generally wrote his own speeches, took a somewhat different approach. In 2002, he gave a wide-ranging speech covering the role of OSTP in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, balance in science funding, the role of the social sciences, and workforce issues — as well as, of course, the budget. His 2003 address was devoted in part to the sticky problem of visa policy for scientists and engineers and the logjams for foreign visitors that resulted from tightened security as the United States responded to the threat of terrorism. His response

¹Fealing *et al.* (2011), p. 4.

Introduction

to accusations that the Bush Administration was politicizing science highlighted his 2004 address.

The memory of most of Marburger's Forum speeches has faded with the passage of time, but his 2005 keynote stands out, at least to those whose professional roles involve the practice or study of science policy. In that year, he turned to a subject that increasingly concerned him as he delved more deeply into the issues he faced: the lack of quantitative models and tools for making decisions on science policy. This talk, which Marburger followed up a month later with an editorial in *Science*, marked the birth of an emerging interdisciplinary research area that soon became known as the "science of science policy."²

As one of the organizers of the AAAS Forum, I sat in my seat in the Amphitheater in the Ronald Reagan Building among the 500 or so Forum attendees listening in wonderment to Marburger critique what he called "the nascent field of the social science of science policy" and tell the audience, many members of which had long and distinguished careers in science policy, that it "needs to grow up, and quickly, to provide a basis for understanding the enormously complex dynamic of today's global technology-based society." My first thoughts were "Where has this guy been for the past 50 years? And what does a physicist really know about the field of science policy, anyway?"³

But, in fact, Marburger had a more sophisticated view of the field than his talks suggested and his deliberately provocative remarks planted a seed. And the seed has sprouted. The science of science policy, subsequently re-christened by the National Science Foundation as the "Science of Science and *Innovation* Policy" or "SciSIP," has infused new thinking and new money into the science policy research community. Although he was certainly not the only one to make the

 $^{^2 \}rm All$ seven of Marburger's Forum addresses as well as his editorial can be found in Marburger (2015), pp. 126–202.

³I was not the only one who had this reaction. As Susan Cozzens, professor in the School of Public Policy at Georgia Tech, and a distinguished scholar of science policy, has written, "The science policy researchers in the audience were amazed that Marburger was not aware of the decades of work that had been done." Cozzens (2010).

point, Marburger was right in calling for better tools and models and a stronger base of empirical research in science policy.⁴

Why, one might ask, in a field that has been actively pursued since the early post-World War II years, does not such a base — a solid evidentiary, research base in science policy — already exist? Or does it exist and just lack a connection to the practitioners of science policy? And is a "science of science policy" even possible? The purpose of this paper is to suggest answers to these questions by examining the evolution of science policy research in the US federal government and academic world from the late 1940s to the present.

⁴According to Ann Carlson, one of his close advisors, Marburger's intent in this speech was to "shake things up" with a provocative challenge to the science policy community, which he saw as too conservative and slow to adopt new tools and methods (Personal communication, October 16, 2017).

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Professor Teich's textbook, Technology and the Future, first published in 1972, went through 12 editions and was in print for 42 years. His other books include Science and Technology in the USA (with Jill H. Pace), Scientists and Public Affairs (with several others); and Science Evaluation and Its Management (with Václav Pačes, and Ladislav Pivec). His articles have appeared in Issues in Science and Technology; Science; Public Administration Review; Science, Technology and Innovation Policy Review; The Information Society; and Slate; as chapters in

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He has been an invited lecturer to organizations in the United States, Japan, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, France, United Kingdom, Russia, China, Norway, Sweden, Hungary, Azerbaijan, Switzerland, Romania, Iceland, and Korea. He has testified before several congressional committees and served as a consultant to many government agencies and nonprofit organizations. He has been quoted in *The New York Times, The Washington Post, Scientific American, The Globe* and Mail (Toronto), *The Wall Street Journal, Nature, Dagens Nyheter* (Sweden), and many other print and electronic media.

He served as a member of the Board of Governors of the US–Israel Binational Science Foundation (BSF) for 18 years, including two terms as Chair. He is a member of the advisory committee to the S&T Fellows program of the California Council for Science and Technology; an honorary member of the Washington Science Diplomats Club; and a member of the Technical Advisory Committee to the Maine Space Grant Consortium.

Professor Teich received the Award for Achievement in Science Policy from the Washington Academy of Sciences in 2004. He was elected a Fellow of AAAS in 1986 and was honored with a *Festschrift* on the occasion of his retirement from AAAS, which was published by AAAS as *The State of Science Policy* in 2013.

He received a B.S. in Physics from M.I.T. and a Ph.D. in Political Science, also from M.I.T.