

Panel Discussion to Focus on Critical Role of Science in Presidential Policy

Contributed by Mitchell Diggs
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OXFORD, Miss. - America's energy needs, health care, education, national security and leadership in technology and innovation, as well as global environmental and humanitarian concerns, are pressing issues facing the next president.

Solutions for each of these problems involve applications of science, yet on the campaign trail, scientific topics rarely come up.

"There is a scientific aspect to just about every issue, foreign and domestic, that our future president will confront," said Neil A. Manson, assistant professor of philosophy at the University of Mississippi. "But there seems to be a lot of silence from both the candidates on how they plan to incorporate science into their policy- and decision-making."

To foster dialog on the role of science in shaping the future of America, Manson has organized a panel discussion at UM on "U.S. Science Policy: What Should Be on the President's Agenda?" The event, free and open to the public, is set for 4-6 p.m. Sept. 18 in Fulton Chapel. The session is to be webcast.

Panelists are science journalists Christopher Mooney and Ronald Bailey, and Jonathan Moreno, professor of medical ethics and the history and sociology of science at the University of Pennsylvania. The group spans the political spectrum, Manson said.

The panelists are to address the scientific component of policy issues ranging from energy and climate change to health care and the regulation of emerging technologies. They also plan to call on the presidential candidates to debate scientific issues.

The candidates are to meet Sept. 26 on the Oxford campus for the first presidential debate of 2008. The Sept. 18 event is among dozens of UM events planned to prepare students and local audiences for the debate.

"None of the scheduled debates are specifically devoted to the candidates making their views on science known to the public," Manson said. "The purpose of this event is to call attention to that absence and to get the public thinking about what it wants from its future president with respect to science."

Journalism students and media professionals covering the presidential campaign should find the discussion helpful, said Kristen Alley Swain, UM assistant professor of journalism.

"Voters need to understand candidate positions on energy security, climate change, sustainable agriculture, space exploration, global disease epidemics, bioethics and other key science issues," Swain said. "Science stories can help voters grasp how a particular science policy decision could make a lasting impact that is millions of times greater than

what individual citizens could accomplish.

"This session will help journalists gain skills and strategies needed to deliver the best available science to policymakers - findings that are not politically manipulated or censored - to use as a tool in the national decision-making process."

Each panelist gets 15 minutes for opening remarks, then the forum is to be open for questions from the audience.

Mooney, senior correspondent for The American Prospect and a contributing editor for Science Progress, is author of two books, "The Republican War on Science" and "Storm World: Hurricanes, Politics, and the Battle over Global Warming." He has written for a variety of publications, including Wired, Science, The New Republic, Harper's, Slate, Salon, Mother Jones, Reason, Columbia Journalism Review and the Washington Post, Los Angeles Times and Boston Globe. He has appeared on shows ranging from CSPAN's "Book TV" to "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart."

He also helped organize Science Debate 2008, a group of prominent leaders in science, technology, business and politics calling on the presidential candidates to debate their views on the issues of the environment, medicine and health, and science and technology policy.

Bailey is the science correspondent for Reason magazine, writing a weekly science and technology column. He is the author of several books on science and technology, including "Liberation Biology: The Moral and Scientific Case for the Biotech Revolution" and "Ecoscam: The False Prophets of Ecological Apocalypse." He has written for the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, National Review and TechCentralStation and has appeared on "NBC Nightly News," "Newshour" on PBS and several National Public Radio programs.

He has produced several weekly public TV series, including "TechnoPolitics" and "Think Tank." In 2004, he testified before a congressional committee on "The Impact of Science on Public Policy."

Moreno is an elected member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies and serves on numerous National Academies committees. He has served as a senior staff member for two presidential advisory committees and has given invited testimony before both houses of Congress.

He has written numerous books concerning medicine and ethics, including "Mind Wars: Brain Research and National Defense" and "In the Wake of Terror: Medicine and Morality in a Time of Crisis." He is also editor of Science Progress, a magazine of science and technology policy published by the Center for American Progress.

While on campus, all three panelists plan to spend time with UM students. Mooney is to share lunch with students from the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College, Bailey plans to meet with students studying philosophy and medical ethics, and Moreno is slated to talk with journalism students interested in covering science.

For more information on the event, contact Manson at 662-915-6713 or namanson@olemiss.edu. For more information on the Department of Philosophy and Religion, go to <http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/philosophy/>.