

SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY

Impactful science as the guiding principle

In the summer of 2014, I received a phone call from Marcia McNutt, then the editor-in-chief of the *Science* family of journals. Marcia described a new effort that she and the AAAS Board had committed to embark upon: to start a new journal—*Science Advances*—to propel the *Science* family of journals, including the emblematic flagship journal *Science*, into the future.

Science Advances would cover all topics, strive to publish rigorous, transformative science, and, like all the *Science* family journals, be anchored in the mission of AAAS. However, *Science Advances* would be different in several critical ways. First, it would be led by an editorial board of leading scientists. Second, it would publish only research articles and reviews and allow longer, flexible formats to foster publication of impactful broad, interdisciplinary, and discipline-specific science. Third, *Science Advances* would be open access to promote wide global readership. *Science Advances* would be built to grow to accommodate the quickly expanding assortment of groundbreaking science being generated around the world. After hearing the unique and powerful goals for the journal, I accepted the invitation and joined the launched editorial board. Now, in our fourth year of publication and extraordinary growth, I have been invited to take on a new role as the editor for *Science Advances*. In this role, I will work directly with our editor-in-chief of the *Science* family of journals, Jeremy Berg; our *Science Advances* managing editor, Philippa Benson; the staff; and the full editorial board, including 12 outstanding deputy editors and now over 130 strong associate editors to serve *Science Advances* in its steadfast commitment to the journal's founding moorings and goals.

I add this new role as the editor to other roles that I believe provide me with diverse and useful perspectives in leading the journal. I am a father and a husband raising four children. I am a faculty and chair of a thriving Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Genetics and the Director of the Simpson Querrey Center for Epigenetics at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. I lecture around the world, hearing the triumphs and challenges of researchers in many countries and contexts. Also, I am a prolific reader of science and scientific news. In all these domains, I see the growth and the intense competition in the pursuit of new knowledge. In academia, I see unprecedented increases in undergraduate, graduate, and medical school applications to top-tier schools submitted by outstanding candidates, young people with stunning credentials.

However, these worthy students are increasingly met with rejection letters, a product of the intense competition for the limited space in the most selective colleges and universities. These rejections are not a measure of the students' worth but rather a reflection of the restricted space and resources in what are considered to be the best higher education institutions.

Similarly, in science, we are seeing a proliferation of exceptional research being done across all disciplines, work submitted to and rejected by top-tier journals, often because of limited scope or space. As a result, many notable and important studies, with data that can help solve critical questions in the field, are being filtered to specialty journals where they will not receive widespread attention or readership or, worse, will be left on the drawing table; thus, knowledge becomes inaccessible as it seeks a strong home for publication. One of the goals of *Science Advances*, as an online open access journal, is to expand as needed to publish the best science being done. This goal is wholly aligned not just with the mission of AAAS but with the fundamental purpose of scientific publication: to record and disseminate important discoveries with the overarching goals of expanding the collective knowledge of the scientific community, enabling others to build upon one's discoveries.

We have and will continue to expand our board of expert scientists to serve as editors and to maintain a publishing workflow that can help us ensure that we can effectively deal with the many outstanding manuscripts from diverse fields that are being submitted to *Science Advances*. Members of *Science Advances*' editorial board are committed to publishing manuscripts judged to be scientifically transformative and technically sound.

As the first editor of *Science Advances*, I will work tirelessly to ensure that the journal's policies and practices stay grounded in its original vision, emphasizing rapid assessment of the rigor and impact of individual manuscripts as our guiding light. We will continue to grow *Science Advances* into the unique journal it is becoming, providing open, thoroughly vetted, and truly transformative science for our authors and readers worldwide.

—Ali Shilatifard

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