

The Research Ambassador Program

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www.ResearchAmbassador.com



National Science Foundation
<http://www.nsf.gov>
Informal Science Education Program: NSF
0322214



National Geographic Society
Conservation Trust program
<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/conservation/index.html>



The International Canopy Network
<http://www.evergreen.edu/ican>



The Evergreen State College
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THE RESEARCH AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

LEGISLATORS ALOFT



An outreach project by researchers to
communicate science to public audiences.

RESEARCH SCENARIO No. 3

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RESEARCH AMBASSADOR

What is Legislators Aloft?

The Legislators Aloft project was initiated to facilitate the transfer of research and conservation messages directly from scientists to decision makers. In 2002, twelve Washington

State legislators and their aides were invited to join forest canopy researchers and conservationists for a day in the forest, climbing trees. Platforms were installed in trees at a height of 60 feet. Participants were instructed in canopy access techniques.



Researchers and legislators discussed topics of mutual interest: sustainability, biodiversity, and global climate change. In subsequent months, individuals contacted each other for information on these topics.

LEGISLATORS ALOFT

What issues does this project address?

Many scientists are interested in conveying their thoughts and research directly to decision makers, so that management decisions will more accurately reflect the current state of knowledge. This project provided a direct conduit for that communication. The relationships among participants continued beyond this event, demonstrating that this activity can have long-term positive effects.



What were the outcomes?

A post-session evaluation, a written questionnaire distributed at the session with an email follow-up, documented that 80% of the legislative audience felt “positive” or “highly-positive” about the experience, and 75% stated they would be willing to contact a forest ecologist for advice or information about environmental issues in the future.

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH AMBASSADOR PROGRAM?

A major problem facing our society is the widening gap between humans and nature, exacerbated by the lack of connections among science, scientists and society. The Research Ambassador Program helps bridge those gaps by providing academic scientists with rewards and incentives to do direct outreach to the public.

The Research Ambassador Program, established in 2003, has recruited scientists from many disciplines in academia and trained them to do outreach, especially in non-traditional venues such as churches, prisons, skateboard parks and hospitals. Researchers link their research to the interest of an existing profession, trade or interest group, and give talks or write popular articles about their research as it relates to that public audience. Rewards for scientists include a financial honorarium, a letter of thanks from a high-ranking academic, outreach training, and contacts to communicate in the local community.