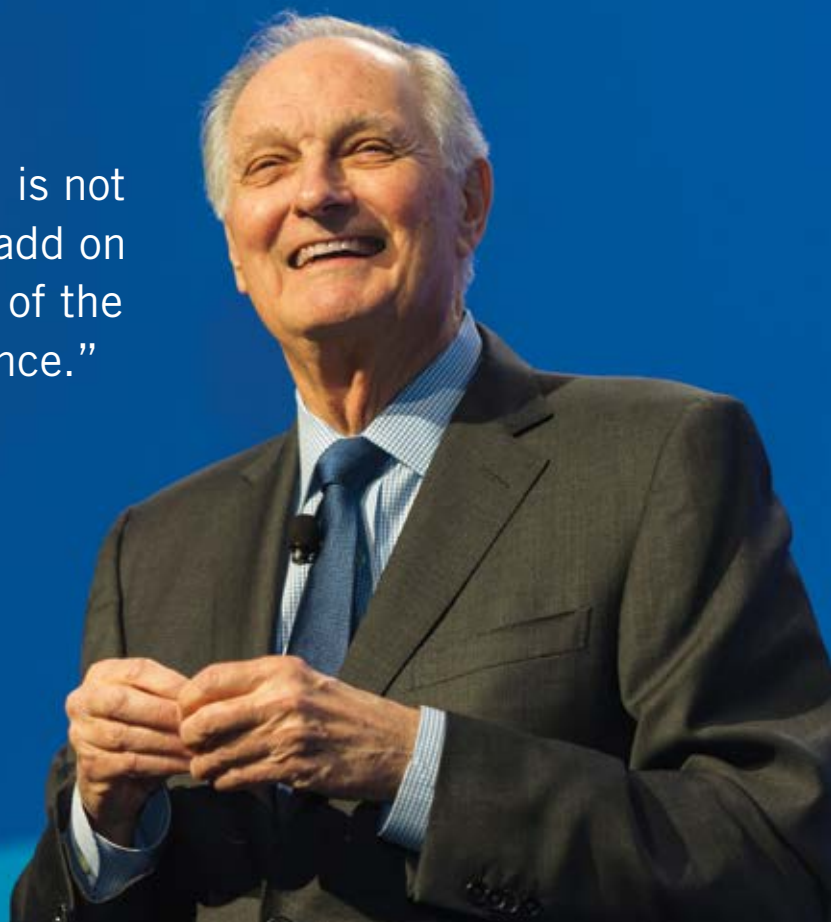


Preparing Scientists to **Connect** With the Public



Communication is not something you add on to science; it is of the essence of science.”

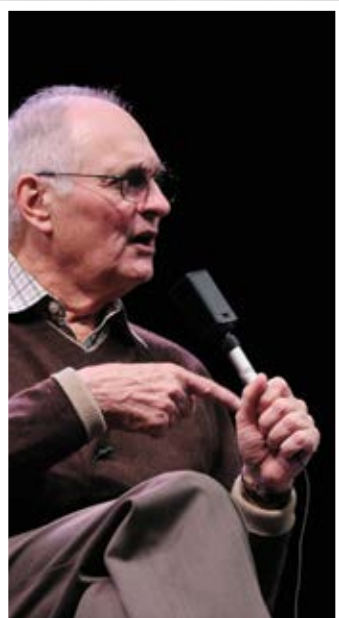
Alan Alda



Alan Alda Center
for Communicating Science



AT STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY



WHAT WE DO

The Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science works to make communication an essential part of the education of scientists, not an afterthought.

- We help scientists, engineers and health professionals — from students to faculty and science leaders — learn to communicate about complex science in clear, vivid and engaging ways.
- We pioneer use of improvisational exercises, storytelling and “Distilling Your Message” techniques to help scientists connect responsively with diverse publics. The Alda Center Method focuses on the needs of the audience.
- We collaborate with a growing network of affiliated programs around the country.
- We teach innovative courses in Communicating Science for hundreds of graduate and medical students at Stony Brook University.
- We lead workshops at dozens of universities, agencies, meetings and companies each year.
- We run The Flame Challenge, an international contest that involves hundreds of scientists and thousands of schoolchildren.

SCENES FROM ALDA CENTER WORKSHOPS: ABOVE, INSTRUCTOR ELIZABETH BASS. OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM LOWER RIGHT, INSTRUCTORS CHRISTINE O'CONNELL, ALAN ALDA AND ALDUSTUS JORDAN; STUDENTS DOING IMPROV; SCIENTIST JAMES MANFREDI; STUDENT MIN SHU

“If you choose
not to
communicate
what you do,
your work
will become
increasingly
irrelevant.

Even worse, you will condemn the rest of us to receive information from sources who may be ignorant or who would seek to distort or misinform for their own gain.”



Carl Safina, PhD
Author and Co-Chair
of the Alda Center



NINA ZAFAR, WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT



HEALTHCARE PERSONNEL PLAY AN IMPROV GAME AT A WORKSHOP WITH IMPROVISATION PROGRAM DIRECTOR VALERI LANTZ-GEFROH (BACK ROW, LEFT).

WHY IT MATTERS

Science plays a key role in all our lives. If the public understood science better, we could make more informed decisions, as a society and as individuals.

- If scientific research is misunderstood, the full benefit of scientists' work will be lost. Chances for collaboration will be missed, crucial questions will go unasked, and good science will lose out to weaker work.
- As science becomes more specialized and complex, the need for clear communication becomes more pressing.
- Society supports science through funding and education. Scientists have a duty to share their work with the public.
- Scientists who communicate will leave a priceless legacy — inspiring the next generation of thinkers and explorers.
- Science is not only important; it can be beautiful and exciting, like great music or a thrilling story. Being able to experience these aspects of science enriches our lives.

“It is astonishing the level of self-awareness one achieves in a short amount of time during the improv sessions

... even for someone like myself, who has been giving scientific presentations for decades.”



James J. Manfredi, PhD
Professor,
Oncological
Sciences, Mount
Sinai School of
Medicine



WENDY CARTER, PHD, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
BALTIMORE COUNTY, AT AN ALDA CENTER WORKSHOP



CARL SAFINA (LEFT) AND HOWARD SCHNEIDER, CO-CHAIRS, ALAN ALDA CENTER FOR COMMUNICATING SCIENCE

WHO WE ARE

We are a nonprofit center that helps scientists share ideas and information more effectively with the public, including public officials, students, the press, potential funders and employers, and colleagues in other disciplines.

- The Center was founded in 2009 within the School of Journalism at Stony Brook University, part of the State University of New York.
- Alan Alda, the actor, writer and science advocate, is a founding member, and a visiting professor in Stony Brook's School of Journalism. The Center was renamed in his honor in 2013.
- Our multidisciplinary steering committee includes members from Brookhaven National Laboratory and Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory.
- Our affiliate network brings together more than a dozen institutions.
- Our instructors include journalists, writers, actors and scientists.

“ The Kavli Foundation has helped introduce CCS **workshops** to many of the **campuses** where we have Kavli Science Institutes. These workshops are being received with tremendous **enthusiasm**.

As one person said, ‘The result for our campus was transformative.’”



Robert W. Conn, PhD
President of The Kavli Foundation



ALAN CORBIN, UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA BIRMINGHAM, AT A CENTER WORKSHOP



MEMBERS OF ALDA CENTER AFFILIATES AND STAFF MEET AT STONY BROOK.

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

The Alda Center works with organizations and individuals in a number of ways. We offer graduate courses, traveling workshops, yearly conferences, Affiliate partnership arrangements and opportunities for sponsorship.

- **Take courses or workshops.** We offer courses and intensive training at Stony Brook and workshops around the country. For more detail on topics and timing, see page 9.
- **Join us as an Affiliate.** Our growing Affiliate network of universities, medical schools and associations offers access to materials, curriculum, “train-the-trainer” sessions and collaborative activities.
- **Support our work.** Tax-deductible contributions are gratefully accepted through the Stony Brook Foundation — by mail to Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science, N-4004 Frank Melville Jr. Memorial Library, Stony Brook, NY 11794-3384, or online at AldaCenter.org.

“Scientists
can read the poetry of
nature,
but unless they
speak to us with
clarity,
we’re left out.

That’s not good for us or
for science. Happily, the
Center for Communicating
Science is changing that
for generations to come.”



Alan Alda
Actor, Director,
Writer and
Founding Member
of the Alda Center



PARTICIPANTS IN THE CENTER'S FALL INSTITUTE, 2012

WORKSHOPS

We lead workshops for scientists at all levels, including Alda-Kavli Leadership Program workshops for science leaders who already speak for their institution or field. Our foundational workshops are:

Improvisation for Scientists

This innovative program, pioneered by Alan Alda, uses improvisational theater games to help you speak more spontaneously, connect more directly and be more responsive to your audience.

Distilling Your Message

Learn to speak clearly and conversationally about what you do and why it matters. Use stories, examples and analogies to engage interest, then add layers of complexity for diverse audiences.

Other topics include: Video Interview Skills, Engaging With Policymakers, Writing for the Public, Communication for Medical Professionals, Using Digital Media, Creating Video Abstracts, Connecting With the Community.

CONFERENCES

Summer Institutes

Faculty and administrators from other universities get a taste of our approach with an eye to bringing it back to their own campuses.

Affiliate Meetings

Members of our growing Affiliate network meet to share experiences and ideas; get materials, feedback and advice; and plan collaborative activities.

Train-the-Trainer Workshops

Instructors working with our Affiliates hone their skills.

Boot Camps

Scientists and health professionals get intensive training in communicating outside their field.

WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Here are some of our appearances:

American Chemical Society

American Physical Society

American Phytopathological Society

Argonne National Laboratory

Boston University

Breast Cancer and Environment Research Program Conference

Brookhaven National Laboratory

Brooklyn College

Carnegie Institution of Science Observatories

Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory

Columbia University

Council of Academic Societies (Association of American Medical Colleges)

Council of Graduate Schools

Cornell University

Dartmouth College

Fordham University

Georgetown Medical Center

Jefferson Medical School

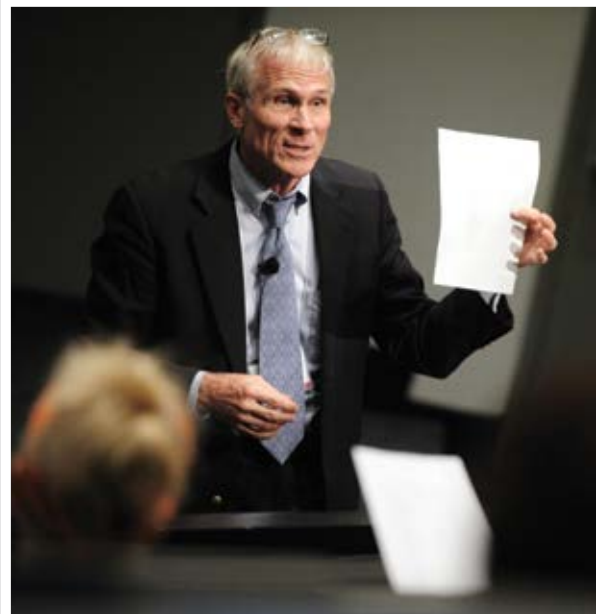
Mount Sinai Medical Center

NASA

Nassau County, NY Department of Health

National Cancer Institute

National Institutes of Health



National Science Foundation

New York Academy of Sciences

New York City Department of Health

Rockefeller University

Second Science Festival, San Juan, Puerto Rico

SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory, Stanford University

Society for Integrative and Comparative Biology

SUNY Cortland

SUNY Upstate Medical Center

The Nature Conservancy

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

University of California, San Diego

University of Chicago

University of Cincinnati

University of Georgia

University of Maine

University of New Mexico

University of Rochester

University of Vermont

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Weill Cornell Medical College

World Science Festival

XSEDE12 Conference

Yale University

For a more complete list, visit AldaCenter.org

“The gap between technologists and the public will widen unless scientists succeed in finding ways to explain their work to broader audiences.”



Thomas M. Connolly Jr.
Executive Director
and CEO of the
American Chemical
Society



THE FLAME CHALLENGE



A STUDENT IN OREGON PARTICIPATES IN THE FIRST ROUND OF THE FLAME CHALLENGE. THE CONTEST ENGAGES CHILDREN AND SCIENTISTS FROM ALL OVER THE U.S. AND AROUND THE WORLD.

ANOTHER WAY TO GET INVOLVED: TAKE THE FLAME CHALLENGE!

As a curious 11-year-old, Alan Alda asked his teacher, “What is a flame?” She replied: “It’s oxidation.” Not a helpful answer.

Now, the Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science challenges scientists to do better. Through our international science communication contest, the Flame Challenge, we ask them to explain complex science in ways that will interest and enlighten an 11-year-old.

Each year, children ask a new Flame Challenge question, and scientists from around the world send in entries to be judged by actual 11-year-olds. Answers can either be written or visual (video or graphic). They are vetted for accuracy and then sent out to about 20,000 student judges, including kids from Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, South America, and around the United States.

Flame Challenge winners are honored at the annual World Science Festival in New York. Visit FlameChallenge.org to see past winning entries and get details about this year’s contest. Or, for more information about how to get involved, please contact us at FlameChallenge@stonybrook.edu.

If you’re a scientist, give it a try! If you’re a teacher, sign up your class to serve as judges!

HOW TO CONTACT US

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Stony Brook University
School of Journalism