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

Alan Alda
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.
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

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

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 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.

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
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

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

For a more complete list, visit AldaCenter.org
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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