Hundreds of scientists representing exceptionally diverse disciplines met this weekend at the 159th annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Scientists from around the country lectured and participated in seminars at the Sheraton Hotel in Boston, President Charles M. Vest and 46 other speakers from MIT addressed the group.

The AAAS aims to facilitate cooperation among American scientists and to "increase public understanding and appreciation of the promise of scientific methods in human progress," according to an AAAS news bulletin. In that vein, the annual conference of the AAAS offers an opportunity for members to discuss their latest research in their fields and communicate their ideas to the public via the press.

The organization publishes the magazine Science.

F. Sherwood Rowland, president of the AAAS, spoke about the role of his organization in helping to foster national policies. In particular, he discussed environmental problems that the United States has to face, such as ozone depletion and pollution.

"In order to meet these challenges, will require detailed knowledge of scientific knowledge, of all of the branches of the AAAS," Rowland said. Optimistically, he pointed to the example of the Montreal Protocol, which requires all participating nations to stop producing chlorofluorocarbons, the chemicals which cause ozone depletion.

"It is possible to get international cooperation based on scientific information. Perhaps there can be a harbinger of it to come," Rowland said.

Proposers of a new government agency, the National Institutes for the Environment, discussed more environmental issues. The proposed NIE will review proposals for environmental research and grant funds competitively.

In a series of technical lectures, several researchers discussed progress in making and understanding devices whose dimensions are on the nanometer scale. Such tiny devices are currently used to sense the deceleration of cars and send a signal to inflate air bags.

Vest spoke at meeting

Vest spoke on Sunday about cooperation between universities, industry, and the government. He said universities need to teach engineering students more about management.

"I think ultimately, some timing in our engineering and management education will have a greater effect," than just funding more science and technology research, Vest said.

If universities are to contribute to American competitiveness in world markets, Vest continued, they would have to forge new partnerships with industries.

Vest supported programs in which business employees spend a year at a university. Although the time involved for such exchanges may get in the way of career advancement, Vest said that such problems are solvable if all parties are interested in the exchange, and "such partnerships could serve both the needs of large corporations and small start-up companies."

He cited MIT's "Leaders for Manufacturing Program," in which students spend two years learning how laboratory research gets translated to final products in private companies. The program is a partnership between MIT and 13 corporations and leads to a masters in engineering and management.

Vest emphatically stated that, "Partnerships of this nature can work."

He concluded by noting that three-way partnerships between universities, industry, and government will be essential for progress in enormous projects which are currently on the cutting edge of science and technology, such as new global communication networks and smart highways.

Student members participate

Student members of the AAAS participated in this year's annual conference for the first time. A caucus of students from Harvard University and Yale University discussed ways in which the students after the caucus. She said that the United States cannot have a healthy population unless it has an educated population, and vice versa. "We do not educate our population on what they can do to improve their own health," she said.

Rowland and William Kiemann, director of the Training and Research Institute at Boston's Children's Hospital, had lunch with 50 disabled children on Friday at the Convention Center.

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