

Director's Message, Chris Fall, Office of Science

Chris Fall, Director of Science, joined the Summit via video teleconference. He said one of his top priorities for the DOE Office of Science is to communicate more effectively to the public what DOE-SC does. "There's no place in the world where we can do the work being done than at [the national laboratories]," he said. He described the present environment as a "golden time for American technology" with unprecedented budgets. However, he stated that we need to help the public (and legislators) make the connection between how DOE-funded research and discoveries make their lives better.

Fall recognized two persistent challenges facing communicators: 1) open communication is not in SC's "Cold War culture" and 2) institutions don't adequately resource communications efforts. He said the second challenge is an easier fix. He committed to work with DOE-SC Office of Communications and Public Affairs to develop a strategic communications plan.

Summit attendees had a number of questions for Chris, including the issue of communicating "politically charged" topics, such as climate change. He stated he wants to "ratchet down politics in science" and stay committed to data and facts. His goal is to raise the level of science literacy in the public with a message that science is about challenging ideas. He remarked he's a "big fan of getting people together with shared expertise." At the same time, he recognizes that it's easy to generate ideas for communications yet harder to find the time to execute them.