

The Critical Importance of Earth and Space Science, Public Perceptions, Global Funding, and What Societies and the Global ESS Community Can Do

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Earth and Space Science is the critical science for the 21st Century. Nearly all major challenges we are facing locally to globally depend on robust Earth and space science and its convergence with other sciences—from addressing climate change and converting from fossil fuels, to feeding a world population that may reach 10 billion, to addressing health issues including clean air and water, to managing other resources on the Earth sustainably, to mitigating natural hazards. And all parts of our science are engaged in some way with these challenges and thus need to be nurtured, including for their curiosity. Public perception and awareness of these issues are growing, but larger, real engagement with the public is needed at all scales. In the U.S., the latest budget proposal would cut support for the sciences while these needs grow, and increased nationalism worldwide, which has also seen signs of expanding, is a persistent threat. AGU and other societies have a key role to play in leading and helping the global scientific community address both the core science and these important scientific and societal challenges. AGU has just developed a new strategic plan reflecting this awareness, based on broad input from the community, and we must as a community think of, develop, and leverage new connections with partners and the global public and policy makers and increase and scale up already successful efforts.

Keywords: Grand challenges, Scientific societies, Funding