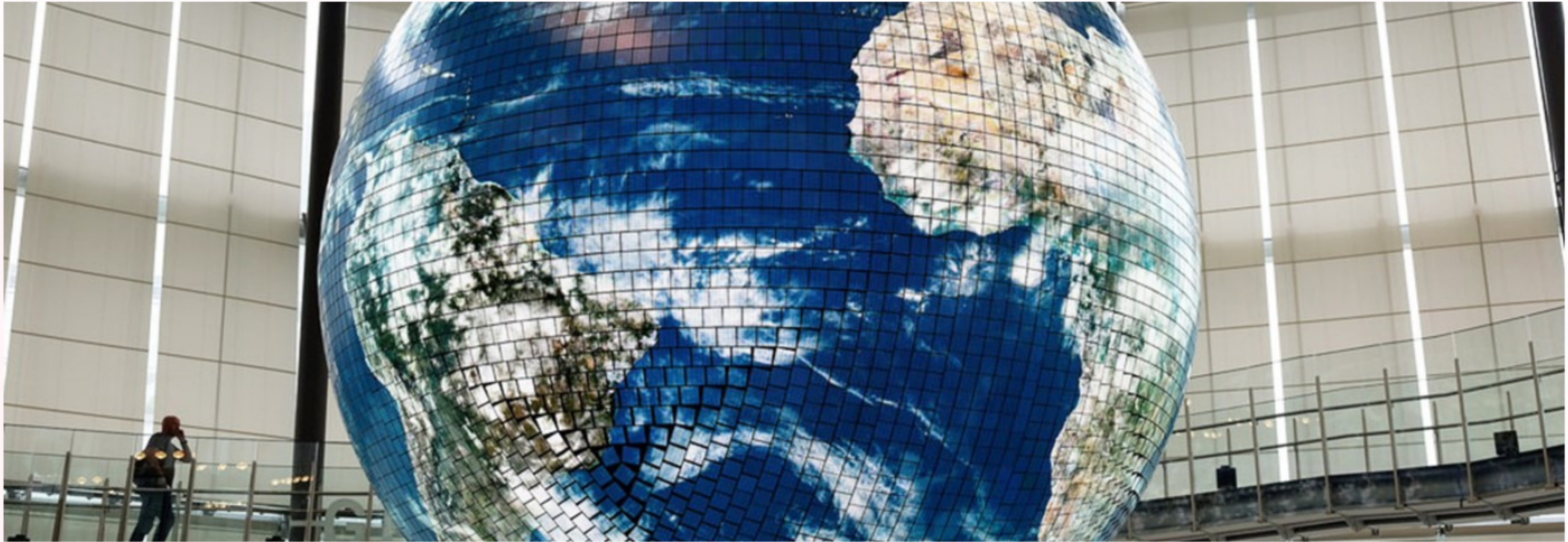


Fostering Scientific Innovation Through Diversity



In 1817, a small group of young naturalists banded together to found the Lyceum of Natural History. At a time when there were no graduate programs, and no clear career paths, they wanted a forum where they could exchange ideas. In other American cities, membership in learned societies was reserved for those who were wealthy, politically influential, or already accomplished in their professions. But from its start, the Lyceum (later renamed the New York Academy of Sciences) was different. The sole qualification for Membership was an interest in the natural sciences.

Fostering broad participation in the sciences has remained central to the Academy's mission throughout its history, with efforts to achieve diversity evolving over time. In its first decades, the Academy sought diversity by recruiting international Members with whom to correspond and exchange scientific journals. This provided a means for the core constituency who met regularly in New York to keep up with science happening around the world.

Later, in 1877, the Academy elected its first female Member, Erminnie A. Smith. She was known for her cabinet of geological specimens, and as an anthropologist at the Smithsonian Institution's Bureau of American Ethnology. In the decades that followed many more women became Members or served in important roles at the Academy, from [Eunice Miner](#) leading the organization for over 30 years starting in the 1930s, to [Margaret Mead](#) serving as Vice President of the Academy in the 1960s, to [Marie Maynard Daly](#), the first African-American woman to earn a Ph.D. in chemistry, serving on our Board in the 1970s.

Understanding and overcoming the barriers facing women in the sciences became the topic of a pivotal Academy conference in 1972. Organized in part as a response to affirmative action, the meeting sparked a sustained effort by the Academy to support women's pursuit of scientific careers. Soon after that conference, [Charlotte Friend](#), renowned for establishing the concept of the oncovirus, became the Academy's first female President in 1978.

Science is better when diverse voices can shape and drive innovation—research bears this out. And we know that significant work remains to be done in diversifying science. To that end, the Academy today supports a wide range of programs designed to increase the participation of underserved students and young women at every stage in the pipeline leading from education to a scientific career, both locally and around the world. Under the umbrella of the [Global STEM Alliance](#), these efforts include after-school mentoring in underserved public schools, activities to support the engagement of young women in STEM, and a program to connect gifted and talented students with STEM mentors. The Academy also supports young scientists all the way through the postgraduate pipeline, so that they stay in science.

Heading into our third century, the Academy remains committed to nurturing a diverse scientific workforce, and to connecting young talent through our worldwide network. In so doing, we move forward in our mission to advance scientific research and knowledge, support scientific literacy, and—ultimately—promote the resolution of society's global challenges through science-based solutions.

Further Reading

Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences published proceedings from the 1972 Women in Science and Engineering Conference. Read them [here](#).

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