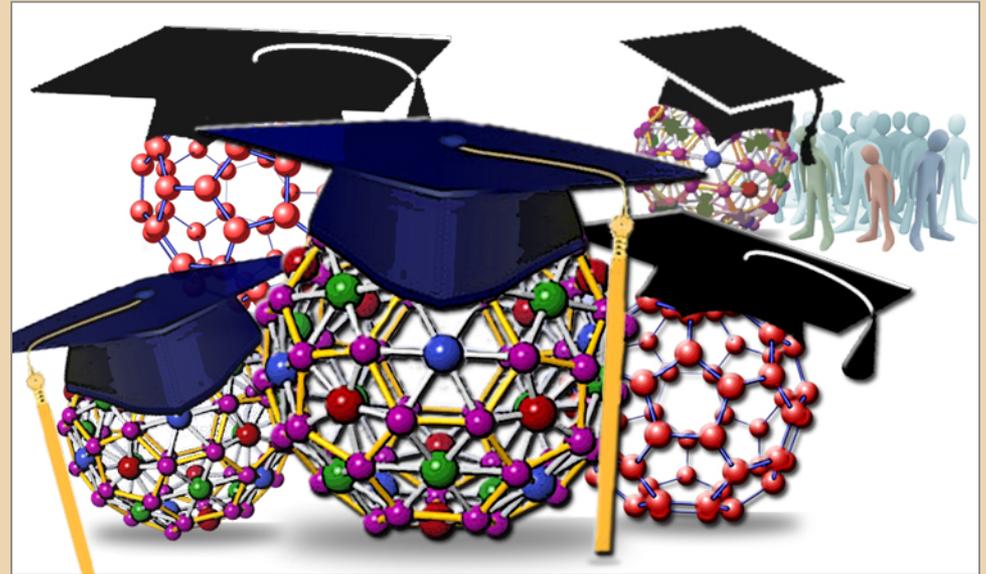


# *Nanotechnology Info Gap Widening: Is Outreach Getting to the Right Audiences?*

The gap in nanotechnology knowledge between the least educated and the most educated citizens has widened over the past five years. According to a CNS-ASU study of national survey data published in the January, 2010 *The Scientist* magazine of the life sciences, Americans with at least a college degree have shown an increased understanding of the new technology since 2004. On the other hand, for those with education levels of less than a high school diploma, knowledge about nanotechnology has declined significantly. These results raise concerns that the group most in need of knowledge and information – those with the lowest levels of formal education – are not being reached by current outreach and education efforts.



Every day that researchers spend not addressing these emerging gaps will create a larger disconnect between scientifically literate audiences and the information poor. There is therefore a real urgency to find ways of communicating effectively with all groups in society. Fortunately, the study also found that the Internet is one of the most effective methods for informing the less educated about nanotechnology. The number of days a week that respondents spent online was significantly related to nanotech knowledge levels. In other words, the Internet may finally live up to its hype as a tool for creating a more informed citizenry by serving as a "leveler" of knowledge gaps about nanotech. The CNS-ASU study offers a clear mandate to researchers to explore the potential of nontraditional ways of connecting with lay audiences.

Read the full article at <http://www.the-scientist.com/2010/1/1/22/1>.

Dr. Elizabeth A. Corley, Lincoln Professor of Public Policy, Ethics & Emerging Technologies  
Arizona State University College of Public Programs

Dr. Dietram A. Scheufele, John E. Ross Chaired Professor in Science Communication, College of Agricultural & Life Sciences, University of Wisconsin-Madison



Research, education and outreach activities at the Center for Nanotechnology in Society at Arizona State University are supported by the National Science Foundation under cooperative agreement #0531194.