

MEDIA ADVISORY

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Science communication workshop comes to the U

The Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science will hold a workshop on Oct. 5 to teach scientists how to talk about their work in accessible terms with the public. Although registration for the full one-day workshop has closed, a free open plenary session will be held from 8:30-10 a.m. at the Fort Douglas Officer's Club, 150 South Fort Douglas Blvd. Light breakfast refreshments will be served at 8:15 a.m.

"Scientists invest decades of their lives delving into the mysteries of their science, and discovering answers to many its most fascinating questions," said Cynthia Furse, associate vice president for research. "But then it can be very difficult to remember back, often decades, to when you didn't know the science you have been so deeply engaged in discovering. It can be challenging, and also very rewarding, for a scientist to reach out to the general public, or even other scientists, and be able to explain their discoveries and their importance."

Participants at the plenary session will learn how to convey technical concepts in short, clear messages for non-scientists. In interactive exercises, participants will engage in improvisation and will practice communicating clearly. After the plenary session, registered participants will dive deeper into concepts of improvisation, long used as a creative exercise by actors. They will also work on distilling a scientific message into its basic jargon-free components. The workshop, which will visit Utah State University Oct. 3-4, is co-sponsored by iUTAH, a multi-institutional research and training program aimed at strengthening science for Utah's water future.

Named for actor and science communication advocate Alan Alda, the Center for Communicating Science is located in the Stony Brook University School of Journalism. The center teaches courses on science communication at the Stony Brook campus, but also travels to institutions around the country to teach workshops to scientists and medical professionals. The center also sponsors science outreach programs such as the Flame Challenge, which challenges scientists to explain basic phenomena such as flame, sound or sleep in terms that an 11-year old can understand easily.

"Scientists can read the poetry of nature, but unless they speak to us with clarity, we're left out," Alda said, in a brochure for the center. "That's not good for us or for science."

See here for a map and directions to the Officer's Club.

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