Students engaging in science policy

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ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS I LEARNED as a co-founder of the Toronto Science Policy Network (TSPN) is that science policy is a fairly broad term and a far more complex topic than I initially thought. The term *science policy* can refer to either science for policy (the use of evidence and science to inform policy decisions) or policy for science (how institutional and governmental policies affect the way we do science, from research funding to research prioritizations).

A little over a year ago, I met with fellow graduate students Ellen Gute, Vasa Lukich, Farah Qaiser, and Molly Sung to discuss creating a science policy group at the University of Toronto. We felt that there was a distinct lack of training for people in the sciences interested in learning about policy- and decision-making processes. And so we created the TSPN: a student-run platform for the University of Toronto community to learn about and engage in science and policy.

TSPN has run a number of workshops on the different facets of science policy, including science advocacy, policy writing, and science communication. We have also invited research experts at the university to host public panels where the University of Toronto community and the interested public can learn about the science behind key policy topics like climate action and Ontario's sexual education curriculum. TSPN has become a platform for us to learn more about science policy and connect with not only our fellow students and faculty but also members in our local community.



In our inaugural year, TSPN has engaged over 200 people through panels, workshops, and other events, and we are looking forward to engaging many more in the years to come!

If you have a passion for science policy, now is a great time to get involved. With the Canadian federal election just around the corner, TSPN is partnering with science policy groups on a national nonpartisan #VoteScience campaign. We want to encourage citizens, especially scientists, to go out and engage candidates on the importance of science and evidence-based decision making.

If you're interested in learning more about science policy, check out the TSPN website for resources. You'll find a list of international science policy organizations, campus groups, and post-doctoral fellowships relating to science policy, and even tips on how to start your own group.



The TSPN team at the 2018 Canadian Science Policy Conference.