



Press Release

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SURA To Honor Former NSF Director, White House Science Advisor

Washington, DC – The Southeastern Universities Research Association today announced that Neal F. Lane, former Director of the National Science Foundation and former chief White House science advisor, would receive SURA’s 2011 Distinguished Friend of Science Award at its Board meeting on November 9. The award honors an individual whose extraordinary efforts “fulfill the SURA mission of strengthening the scientific and technical capabilities of the Southeast and nation.”

“SURA honors one of our own with this recognition of a great scientist and advocate for research,” said Charles W. Steger, President of Virginia Tech and Chair of the SURA Council of Presidents and Executive Committee. “His efforts in the White House to grow the NSF budget by 17 percent in his last year helped pave the way for improving the nation’s research investments in the physical sciences for the next decade.”

Lane served as Assistant to the President for Science and Technology and Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, from August 1998 to January 2001, and as Director of the National Science Foundation (NSF) from October 1993 to August 1998. At OSTP, Lane continued his efforts to increase research funding, especially for the physical sciences and engineering. He was instrumental in establishing the National Nanotechnology Initiative, nearly doubling the national expenditure in nanotechnology. The initiative, having just celebrating its 10th anniversary, now has an annual budget of nearly \$2 billion.

Prior to his service at NSF, Lane was Provost and Professor of Physics at Rice University in Houston – a SURA member institution – a position he had held since 1986. He joined the Physics Department at Rice in 1966 as an assistant professor. He took leaves from Rice to serve as Chancellor of the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, as well as an earlier leave to work as NSF’s Director of the Division of Physics.

“Neal Lane’s example as a ‘civic scientist’ is a fitting aspiration in today’s public policy arena,” said Jerry P. Draayer, SURA President & CEO. “With increasing challenges for science and decreasing support for funding it, Professor Lane’s efforts to communicate the economic worth and practicality of research is more important than ever.”

Born in Oklahoma City in 1938, Dr. Lane earned his B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees in physics from the University of Oklahoma. Early in his career he received the W. Alton Jones Graduate Fellowship and held an NSF Doctoral Fellowship, an NSF Post-Doctoral Fellowship (while in residence at Queen’s University, Belfast, Northern Ireland) and an Alfred P. Sloan Foundation

Fellowship (at Rice University and on research leave at Oxford University). He earned Phi Beta Kappa honors in 1960 and was inducted into Sigma Xi National Research Society in 1964, serving as its national president in 1993. His research contributions have been in theoretical atomic and molecular physics, particularly the theory of atomic collisions.

Dr. Lane has received numerous prizes and awards, including the AAAS Philip Hauge Abelson Award, AAAS William D. Carey Award, American Society of Mechanical Engineers President's Award, American Chemical Society Public Service Award, American Astronomical Society /American Mathematical Society/American Physical Society Public Service Award, NASA Distinguished Service Award, Council of Science Societies Presidents Support of Science Award, Distinguished Alumni Award of the University of Oklahoma, and over a dozen honorary degrees. In 2009, Dr. Lane received the National Academy of Sciences Public Welfare Medal, the American Institute of Physics K.T. Compton Medal for Leadership in Physics, and the Association of Rice Alumni Gold Medal for service to Rice University.

At NSF, Lane worked tirelessly to convince the Congress to increase research funding, even during the budget-cutting climate of the mid-1990s and to support basic research. During that time, NSF also secured funding for the construction of the Large Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory (LIGO), as well as construction of one of the Gemini telescopes, and for the replacement of the U.S. research station at the South Pole.

During his time in Washington, Lane became increasingly concerned about the public's lack of understanding of science and its impact on people's lives as well as scientists' lack of understanding of the public. He was an early promoter of the concept of the "civic scientist." Returning to Rice, following his time in Washington, Lane has continued to be active in science and technology policy and education.

The SURA Distinguished Friend of Science Award was established in 2006 to commemorate the organization's 25th Anniversary. SURA's Executive Committee manages the solicitation, screening and selection of the recipient for this award. Past honorees included U.S. Senators Lamar Alexander and John Warner; Norman Augustine, former CEO of Lockheed Martin and advocate for American leadership in research and innovation; and Chuck Robb, former governor and U.S. Senator from Virginia. Each of SURA's 62 member institutions is eligible to nominate candidates for the award.

Lane will be presented the award and a \$20,000 honorarium at a breakfast reception held in conjunction with the SURA Board of Trustees Fall Meeting in Washington, DC.

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The Southeastern Universities Research Association (SURA) is a consortium of over 60 leading research institutions in the southern United States and the District of Columbia established in 1980 as a non-stock, nonprofit corporation. SURA serves as an entity through which colleges, universities, and other organizations may cooperate with one another, and with government and industry in acquiring, developing, and using laboratories and other research facilities and in furthering knowledge and the application of that knowledge in the physical, biological, and other natural sciences and engineering. For more information, visit www.sura.org.