



What's New This Spring

THEATER: New Play About Jane Goodall's First Scientific Expedition in Africa Debuts at Ensemble Studio Theatre



A new Sloan-commissioned play, [*Have You Met Jane Goodall and Her Mother?*](#), written by Michael Walek and directed by Linsay Firman, debuted as the Ensemble Studio Theatre (EST)/Sloan Mainstage Production on March 5, running until March 30. The comedic play dramatizes the first month of anthropologist Jane Goodall's inaugural expedition to study chimpanzees with her mother in Africa, where Goodall made discoveries that ultimately changed our understanding of humanity. The production of *Have You Met Jane Goodall and Her Mother?* was supported by a 2022 Sloan grant to EST, one of Sloan's two flagship theater partners. The Sloan/EST Project has commissioned over 200 plays and

supported dozens of productions across the US and internationally.

BOOKS: National Book Foundation Announces 2025 Sloan Science + Literature Awardees

The [winners of the fourth annual Science + Literature Awards](#), established by Sloan in partnership with the National Book Foundation (NBF) to honor books that celebrate excellence and diversity in science writing, were announced in all three categories: non-fiction, fiction and poetry. Winners include Ed Yong's *An*



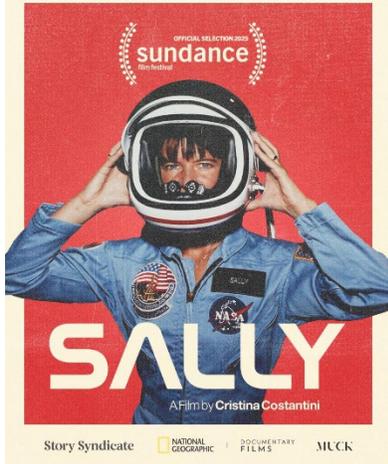
Immense World: How Animal Senses Reveal the Hidden Realms Around Us (nonfiction), about the sensory experiences of birds, bugs, dogs and other animals; Ramona Ausubel's *The Last Animal* (fiction), about two sisters who join their paleontologist mother on her scientific expeditions; and Claire Wahmanholm's *Meltwater* (poetry), which dissects the vulnerability of parenthood and the natural world. The winners will be celebrated in a ceremony at the Cooper Union on March 19, featuring readings and conversations with the selected authors. The Science + Literature Awards are supported by a 2024 Sloan grant.



Spring Updates

FILM

SUNDANCE 2025: *Sally* Wins 2025 Sloan Feature Film Prize at Sundance



Sally was awarded the Alfred P. Sloan Feature Film Prize at this year’s Sundance Film Festival, where it premiered on January 28. The feature-length documentary, directed by Cristina Costantini, follows the professional trajectory of the first American woman to go into space, astronaut and physicist Sally Ride, and her closeted relationship with her life partner, Tam O’Shaughnessy. The film was cited by the jury “for its moving portrait of a pioneering scientist and a complex human being who became the first American woman to fly in space and who insisted on living her own life while negotiating the restrictive culture of NASA and the mass media.” This year’s Sloan jury included filmmakers Michael Almereyda (*Tesla*), Nicholas Ma (*Mabel*), and Sam & Andy Zuchero (*Love Me*) as well as astrophysicist Dr. Nia Imara and cognitive

neuroscientist Dr. Monica Lopez. The Sloan Feature Film Prize and other Sloan activities at Sundance (see below) are supported by a 2023 grant to the Sundance Institute.

SUNDANCE 2025: Three New Sloan-Winning Projects Celebrated at Award Ceremony

[Three exciting new projects](#) featuring scientific themes and characters were celebrated at the 2025 Sundance Film Festival and will now be developed at Sundance via the nationwide Sloan film pipeline. Ella Gale was awarded the Sloan Episodic Fellowship for *Greenwashers*, a comedy about a young environmental engineer who discovers a water rights conspiracy; Katla Sólnes was awarded the Sloan Development Fellowship for *Eruption*, about the wife of a geologist studying volcanoes; and Brittany Wang was awarded the Sloan Commissioning Grant for *Thin Ice*, about the discrimination a female scientist experienced as a young researcher. *Eruption* previously received the 2024 Sloan Screenwriting Award at Columbia University and *Thin Ice* is the recipient of the 2024 Sloan Screenwriting Award at USC and the 2024 Sloan Student Grand Jury Prize. At the Sundance award ceremony, Cristina Costantini also accepted the Sloan Feature Film Prize on behalf of her film *Sally*.





SUNDANCE 2025: Sloan Panel Brings Scientists and Filmmakers Together in Park City



Three filmmakers, one scientist, and one astronaut gathered at Sundance to discuss cinema’s portrayal of scientific, cultural, and political barriers faced by scientists, engineers, and mathematicians. *The Big Conversation: Breaking Barriers* was moderated by TV writer Wendy Calhoun and featured *Sally* director Cristina Costantini, *Guardians of the Galaxy* writer Nicole Perlman, professor of Genetics at Harvard Medical School Dr. Chao-ting Wu, and NASA astronaut Dr. Cady Coleman.

SUNDANCE 2025: Sloan Offers Strategies for Climate Change and Storytelling

Vice President and Program Director Doron Weber joined a panel at the Sundance Film Festival on “Stories as Solutions: Answering the Call to Support Environmental Films” in a program curated by The Redford Center. The panel, part of a one-day Festival program focused on climate change and film, discussed the recent increased focus on climate change from filmmakers, the current lack of effective communication of climate science and stories, and strategies to effectively allocate funding to diverse filmmakers to create maximum impact. Moderated by *Path of the Panther* director Eric Bendick, the panel also included Executive Director of The Redford Center Jill Tidman, President and CEO of HipHop Caucus Reverend Yearwood, and Director at Pop Culture Collab Angela Peoples.



Sloan Winner for 2024 Sundance Feature Film Prize Released in Theaters



[Love Me](#), the Alfred P. Sloan Feature Film Prize winner at the 2024 Sundance Film Festival directed and written by Sam and Andy Zuchero and starring Kristen Stewart (*Twilight*, *Spencer*) and Steven Yeun (*Beef*, *Minari*), was released in theaters on January 31. The film explores the limits of artificial intelligence through a love story between a buoy and a satellite in the aftermath of humankind’s extinction. *Love Me* received positive reviews in [The New York Times](#) and [Mashable](#), among others.



Documentary About Scientist John Lilly by Michael Almereyda and Courtney Stephens Premieres

[John Lilly and the Earth Coincidence Control Office](#), a documentary by Michael Almereyda and Courtney Stephens about controversial neuroscientist and biologist John Lilly, premiered at the International Film Festival Rotterdam on February 7. Narrated by award-winning actress Chloë Sevigny, the film combines historical footage, home movies, pop culture, and interviews with Lilly's contemporaries in science and art to explore the iconoclastic scientist's work in the 1960s, from his invention of the isolation tank to his experiments with dolphins and hallucinogens that expanded our understanding of animal and human consciousness. The documentary later premiered in New York City at the Museum of Modern Art on February 25 with a screening and post-show conversation with the filmmakers. The film was featured in [The Hollywood Reporter](#), [The Film Stage](#) and [Filmmaker Magazine](#) among others. *John Lilly and the Earth Coincidence Control Office* was supported by a 2022 Sloan grant.



The Calling About BIPOC Medical Students in the Bronx Premieres on PBS



[The Calling: A Medical School Journey](#) by Emmy Award-winning director Asako Gladsjo premiered on PBS on March 17. The feature-length documentary, shot in verité style, follows the lives of BIPOC medical students over the course of a year in varying phases of their medical education at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx and its world-class teaching hospital, Montefiore Medical

Center. Through their stories, the film exposes the most challenging issues faced by medical students today, including their uphill battle in an American healthcare system with deeply rooted inequity. Both Albert Einstein College of Medicine and Montefiore Medical Center made headlines last year when they received a \$1 billion donation from Ruth Gottesman, longtime professor at the school, to allow all incoming students to attend for free. The documentary initially premiered at [DC/DOX](#) in June 2024. *The Calling* was supported by a 2022 grant.



Next Generation of Filmmakers to be Celebrated at Sloan Awards Reception and Reading



The [winners of the Sloan Grand Jury and Student Discovery Prizes](#) were announced by Sloan and the Museum of the Moving Image (MoMI) on January 21. The Sloan Grand Jury Prize celebrates the “best of the best” winning screenplays submitted by Sloan’s six film school partners. The 2024 winner was Brittany Wang from the University of Southern California School of Cinematic Arts (pictured left). Her pilot script *Thin Ice* follows Jane Willenbring, now a tenured geomorphologist who grapples with the abuse she endured as a young scientist on a research expedition with a legendary glaciologist more than 25 years ago. Willenbring was also one of three female scientists in the acclaimed Sloan documentary *Picture a Scientist*, about discrimination against women in science.

The Sloan Student Discovery Prize celebrates an exceptional science or technology script from one of six new public universities added to the program. Yoel Gebremariam from the University of Michigan (pictured below) won the 2024 award for his script *Impact*, about an American astronaut who lands on the moon and joins forces with an Indian astronaut when a meteor storm strikes. An honorable mention for the Discovery Prize was also awarded to SUNY Purchase’s Hallie Stephenson for her script *Abel’s Baby*, about a convict who uses physics, engineering, and chemistry to save herself and her unborn child in the late 18th century.

The scripts were selected by a jury that included CUNY biologist Dr. Sebastian Alvarado, Johns Hopkins School of Medicine medical anthropologist Dr. Jeremy Greene, Columbia University paleoclimatologist Dr. Maureen E. Raymo, director Johan Renck (*Chernobyl*), actress/director Francesca Scorsese (*We Are Who We Are*) and Netflix Sustainability Officer Emma Stewart. The winners were celebrated as a part of MoMI’s First Light Festival on March 15 with a ceremony, reception, and live readings of excerpts from both winning scripts. The Sloan Student Prizes are supported by a 2023 Sloan grant.





Athena Film Festival Hosts Annual Celebration for Sloan Screenwriter and STEM Showcase



[Athena Film Festival](#) (AFF) hosted a full day of STEM programming as part of its annual film festival at Barnard College on March 9. The festival included a reception and staged reading to celebrate the winner of the 2024 Alfred P. Sloan Athena List Development Grant, Gina Hackett for her script *A Bridge Between Us*. The award is part of the Festival's year-round Creative Development Program to outstanding science-themed projects by and about women. *A Bridge Between Us* tells the story of the jealousy and discrimination experienced by the world's first female engineer when she steps into her husband's role as chief engineer of the Brooklyn Bridge after he's paralyzed during its construction. For the annual Sloan STEM Showcase, Athena also screened *Spacewoman* followed by a panel. The documentary by Hannah Berryman explores the achievements of Eileen Collins, the first woman to pilot and command a spacecraft.

The screening was followed by a panel on "Making Space for Women in Space" that will discuss the vital contributions of women across space-related fields, from engineering to exploration, and the impact of mentorship in shaping the next generation of women in these fields. The Athena Film Festival is supported by a 2024 Sloan grant to Barnard College.

Twister Selected for Sloan Showcase by Toronto International Film Festival

The Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) hosted a screening and Q&A of *Twisters* on February 26 as part of their year-round, Sloan-supported science programming. The film by Lee Isaac Chung, starring Daisy Edgar Jones and Glen Powell, is a disaster film and standalone sequel to the hit 1996 film *Twister* about a meteorology student and social media storm



chaser who team up to test a theory that would reduce the intensity of deadly twisters. The post-screening Q&A, moderated by broadcast meteorologist Colette Kennedy, discussed the science in the film with director Chung, founding Director of the Canadian Severe Storms Laboratory Dr. Gregory Kopp, and technical consultant for both *Twister* films Dr. Kevin Kelleher. The Q&A is available to stream on [TIFF's YouTube page](#). TIFF is the latest Sloan film partner supported by an inaugural 2023 grant.



Sloan Hosts Presentation at the World Congress of Science and Factual Producers

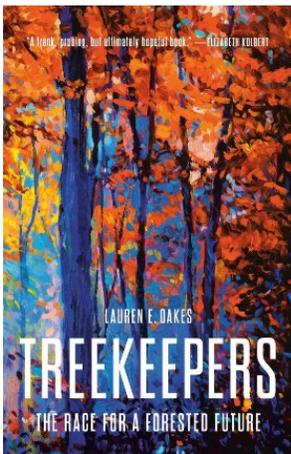


Vice President and Program Director Doron Weber led an in-person session focused on the Sloan Public Understanding program's work with factual content and new grantmaking in YouTube and TikTok at the [2024 World Congress of Science and Factual Producers](#) (WCSFP) in Morocco last December. The presentation featured trailers and clips from traditional Sloan supported

documentaries, such as *Bombshell: The Hedy Lamarr Story*, *How to Survive a Pandemic*, and *Coded Bias*. The presentation also focused on Sloan's new priorities on YouTube and TikTok, spotlighting recent projects such as [SciShow](#), the [Sloan Science Prizes for YouTube](#), and [Howtown](#). The presentation was followed by a Q&A. Sloan support for WCSFP also included a sponsorship of a separate session *From Doc to TikTok* as well as travel funds for two American-based emerging science content producers from historically underrepresented groups. Sloan programming at the WCSFP was supported by a 2024 presidential grant.

BOOKS

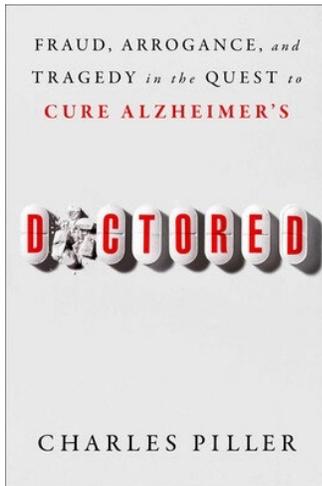
Treekeepers: The Race for a Forested Future by Lauren Oakes Published on November 12



[Treekeepers: The Race for a Forested Future](#) by conservation scientist and science writer Lauren Oakes was published on November 12, 2024. The book offers an honest yet optimistic look at the role of the world's forests in combating climate change, and more specifically, whether efforts to plant trees – by individuals and corporations – offer real benefits. *Treekeepers* features scientists, innovators, and local citizens from the Scottish Highlands to the Panamanian jungle and highlights the effort required to grow or regrow a forest and protect what remains. The book has received positive reviews in [Scientific American](#), [Publishers Weekly](#), and [Kirkus Reviews](#) among others. *Treekeepers* was supported by a 2023 Sloan grant.

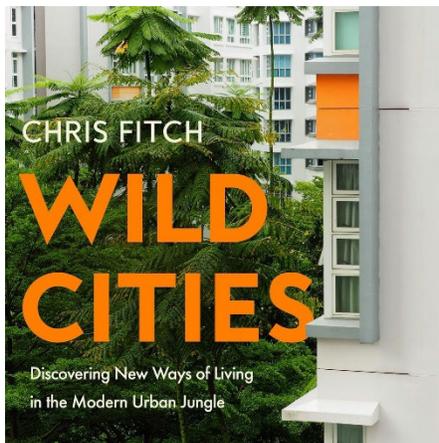


***Doctored: Fraud, Arrogance, and Tragedy in the Quest to Cure Alzheimer's* by Charles Piller
Published on February 4**



[*Doctored: Fraud, Arrogance, and Tragedy in the Quest to Cure Alzheimer's*](#) by investigative journalist Charles Piller was published on February 4. The book uncovers how self-interested researchers and corporate greed have led to decades of misleading Alzheimer's research. Beginning with whistleblower Matthew Schrag, a Vanderbilt professor whose work revealed that the leading hypothesis about the disease contained deliberately falsified data, Piller not only exposes a vast network of deceit, but also shows how other scientists are pushing back against it in the service of science and those patients who have been subject to questionable drugs. The book has received positive reviews in [*The Wall Street Journal*](#), [*Undark Magazine*](#), and [*The Guardian*](#) among others. *Doctored* was supported by a 2023 Sloan grant.

***Wild Cities: Discovering New Ways of Living in the Modern Urban Jungle* by Chris Fitch to be
Published on April 10**



[*Wild Cities: Discovering New Ways of Living in the Modern Urban Jungle*](#) by travel and science writer Chris Fitch will be published on April 10. From Tokyo and Flagstaff to Munich and Nairobi, the book explores cities around the world and the cutting-edge technology they employ to preserve nature in urban areas. With two-thirds of humanity living in towns and cities by 2050 and the necessity of nature for our health and wellness, Fitch provides readers with a look into the cities of the future. *Wild Cities* was supported by a 2022 Sloan grant.



TELEVISION

Two Sloan *American Experience* Documentaries Nominated for Writers Guild Awards

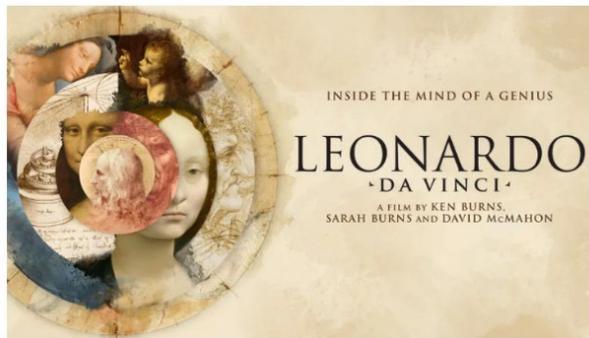


[The Cancer Detectives: The Trailblazers Who Landed the First Blow Against Cancer](#) and [Poisoned Ground: The Tragedy at Love Canal](#), two Sloan-supported documentaries in the American Experience series, were nominated for the [2025 Writers Guild Awards](#) in the Documentary Script category. *The Cancer Detectives* explores the first-ever war on cancer, focusing on the people who created the life-saving

cervical cancer test, also known as the pap smear: Dr. George Papanicolaou, his wife Mary, Japanese artist Hashime Murayama, African American OBGYN Dr. Helen Dickens, and a new class of female scientists known as cyto-screeners. *Poisoned Ground* tells the story of the residents of Love Canal, a working-class neighborhood in New York state, who in the 1970s discover that their town was built on a chemical waste dump leaking toxic substances and causing extensive health issues. Both films premiered in 2024 and were supported by a 2023 Sloan grant.



Ken Burns' *Leonardo da Vinci* Premieres on PBS After Telluride Debut



[Leonardo da Vinci](#), a two-part, four-hour documentary directed and produced by Ken Burns, Sarah Burns, and David McMahon, premiered on PBS in two parts on November 18 and November 19. The film tells the story of fifteenth century Italian polymath Leonardo da Vinci, known for his work as a painter, scientist, sculptor, engineer, and more. It humanizes one of the most celebrated visionaries of all time and his profound

achievements, beginning with his birth out of wedlock to a peasant woman and weaving through his days as a military architect, apprentice, and muralist. The film draws from da Vinci's own personal notebooks and interviews with scholars, artists, and engineers. *Leonardo da Vinci* initially premiered at the 2024 Telluride Film Festival and was supported by a 2023 Sloan grant. The film received positive reviews and was featured in [The Guardian](#), [The New York Times](#), and [CBS News](#) among others. The documentary series is [available for purchase on PBS](#) and the trailer is available to [watch on YouTube](#).



THEATER

Eureka Day About Vaccines and Public Health Opens at Manhattan Theatre Club



Eureka Day, a play by Jonathan Spector, opened at Manhattan Theatre Club (MTC) on December 16 at the Samuel J. Friedman Theatre on Broadway. The play takes place at a new-age private elementary school in Berkeley, California where an outbreak of the mumps challenges the Board of Directors and its liberal policy of inclusion. The insightful and satiric story is set one year before the COVID-19 pandemic and touches on public attitudes towards vaccines. On January 8, MTC held a panel discussing the scientific

themes in the play, including the medical and social impacts of vaccination and public health policy. Moderated by actor and science communicator Kerri Bishé, panelists were Co-Director of NYU's Global Center for Implementation Science Corrina Moucheraud, former CDC Associate Director for Adult Immunization Ram Koppaka, and Co-Director of Mount Sinai's Center for Vaccine Research and Pandemic Preparedness Viviana A. Simon. *Eureka Day* received positive reviews in [The New York Times](#), [The Guardian](#), and [TheaterMania](#) among others. The Broadway production of *Eureka Day* is supported by a 2024 production grant to MTC, one of Sloan's two flagship theater partners.

Manhattan Theatre Club Series Presents Public Reading of Sloan Play *Let's Ride*



Let's Ride by Alex Lin (pictured left), a Sloan/MTC-commissioned play, was presented in a public reading at MTC's City Center Stage I on March 17 as part of the Theatre's [Ted Snowden Reading Series](#). The reading followed a week-long developmental workshop with director Laura Dupper, a cast of actors, and the support of MTC's Artistic Development staff. *Let's Ride* explores automation in algorithms and how they shape our lives through the story of a rideshare driver investigating his own unjust firing. The play was commissioned in 2023 as a part of MTC's Sloan Initiative. Sloan's ongoing partnership with MTC is supported by a 2024 grant.



ALFRED P. SLOAN FOUNDATION

March 2025

Program Updates from VP and Program Director Doron Weber

Live Readings for 3 New Sloan Plays Featured at New York City Center

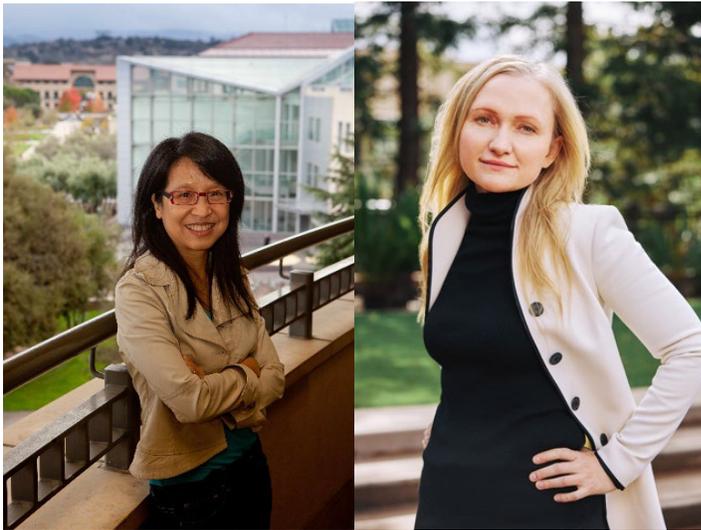


Excerpts from three new science plays commissioned through [Sloan's partnership with the Manhattan Theatre Club \(MTC\)](#) were featured at New York City Center on December 2, 2024. The selected plays were *For External Use Only* by Shayok Misha Chowdhury about cultural differences in public health policy; *Untitled* by Noah Diaz about d/Deaf culture, communication and ASL acquisition;

and *Ann and Noah* by Max Posner about the different treatments for multiple sclerosis. After the reading, the playwrights discussed the themes in their plays with moderator Dr. Ruth Angus and a panel of scientists: otolaryngologist Dr. Ana H. Kim, neurologist Dr. Vilas Menon and cardiologist Dr. Jonathan Newman. The event was supported by a 2021 Sloan grant.

SPECIAL INITIATIVES

Stanford Hosts First Workshop of a Public AI Assistant to World Wide Knowledge



Led by Stanford computer scientist Monica Lam and AI expert Lila Tretikov, the Stanford Open Virtual Assistant Lab organized an invitation-only workshop focused on the concept of a public AI Assistant to World Wide Knowledge (WWK) on February 13. With a multidisciplinary community of educators, journalists, social scientists, technologists, and potential sponsors in attendance, the conference sought to refine the concept of a public library of knowledge on the internet to promote reliable, freely accessible knowledge

and research. The workshop featured a pilot demonstration of the OVAL lab's Public AI Assistant as well as presentations on large language models, its applications in various fields, and sustainable funding in this space. Sloan first supported Lam's pilot project to prototype the first open-source, privacy-protecting virtual assistant in 2020, with an additional grant in 2021 to continue her work. The workshop was supported by a 2024 Sloan grant.



Building Trust in Science for a More Informed Future Conference Held at MIT

The Aspen Institute Science & Society Program and the MIT Press hosted a joint conference to discuss the growing gap between science and public understanding in Cambridge on March 10. The conference brought together researchers, policy makers, science communicators, and journalists to explore effective messaging to build trust in science and scientists and best practices to amplify voices and perspectives that have been historically marginalized. Kicking off with a joint keynote address from former NIH director Francis Collins and Sudanese climate journalist Lina Yassin (pictured below), panels at [*Building Trust in Science for a More Informed Future*](#) included: “When Two Tribes Go to War: Polarization and Science Communication,” “Climate Communication After the Age of Denial,” and “The Good, Bad and the Ugly: The Role of Generative AI in Undermining but (potentially) Rebuilding Trust.” The conference is supported by a 2024 Sloan grant.



First Senior Congressional Staff Seminar on Artificial Intelligence to Kick Off at MIT



MIT will host a three-day seminar to educate senior Congressional staff on the future of AI from April 16-18. The program, which will have both virtual and in-person components, aims to improve the technological literacy of government staffers, especially as technologies such as ChatGPT advance rapidly. The conference, led by MIT Dean for Digital Learning Cynthia Breazeal (pictured left), will include panels on the current state of large language models, including their strengths and limitations, AI’s potential to transform transportation systems and healthcare, and the implications of AI for US national security. In tandem with the in-person program, MIT’s Open Learning division will publish online modules that will include short instructional videos from MIT experts, executive summary PDFs that explain key points, and infographics. This three-day seminar is the first of two supported by a 2024 Sloan grant.

Program Team: Doron Weber, *Vice President and Program Director* | Shriya Bhindwale, *Program Associate* | Swan Griffith, *Program Coordinator*