

nature structural & molecular biology

The year that was and the year ahead

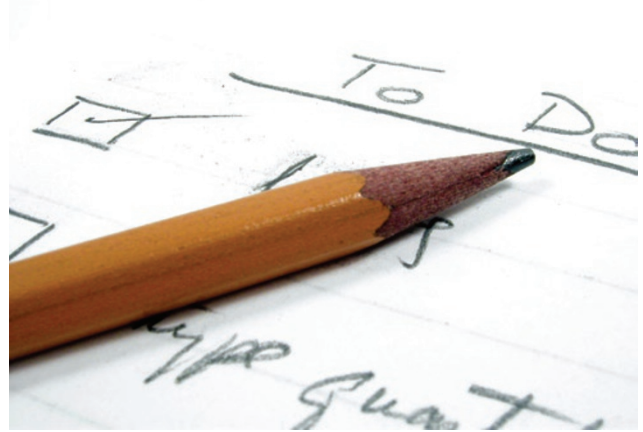
Now that we are well into 2009, I can't help but think about the year that has passed. Fear not, this will not be one of those dreaded holiday letters where we list all the highs and lows of the year. But as I look back, there are many things I hope that I have permanently crossed off my 'To Do' list and others that I am looking forward to doing.

Here are some of the things I would like to do less of in 2009.

1. Try to convince those in government that money invested in science and technology is an investment in the future. Federal funding in the life sciences has fallen in real dollars since 2004. As a result, the success rates of grant applications are dangerously low and excellent science is not being funded.
2. Argue that money that the government does invest in science should go to basic science research rather than applied or directed research. In fact, I would argue that more money should be spent not just on basic research but also on so-called 'high-risk' projects—those that are unlikely to succeed but that would have enormous value if they did.
3. Push to get real science and technology issues into the political discussion rather than hot button issues such as abortion.
4. Advocate for the equality of women. Women still make up only 10–20% of full professors and they are paid less than men.
5. Remind scientists of the crucial role they have in educating the public about the scientific process.
6. Explain why evolution belongs in a science classroom and 'intelligent design' doesn't.
7. Convince people that spending money on education is money well spent. The United States is once again not among the top ten countries for science and math education. This means that we are not adequately preparing our children for tomorrow's workforce.

And here are just some of the things we as a group look forward to doing more of in 2009 (in no particular order).

1. Watch how President Barack Obama puts his science and education policies into action (he actually mentioned both science and education several times in his inaugural speech).



© Paige Foster, iStockPhoto

2. Continue to educate ourselves (and our readers) about politics in the United States and abroad and how decisions made at the government level can and do affect us all.
3. Explore issues at the interface between science and society (read: how to get the public more engaged in scientific research and education).
4. Go to more meetings and do more laboratory visits so that we can meet and talk to more of you. That way we can hear about your work and get your thoughts about the journal firsthand. In the meantime, you can write (nsmb@natureny.com) or call us (+1 212 726 9331).
5. Read *The New York Times*, *The Economist*, *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic Monthly* (fill in your favorite magazine), novels, and go to plays, museums, concerts and so on, so that we can have semi-intelligent conversations over meals and at the bar about something other than science.

Certainly not a comprehensive set of lists, but a good start to what we hope will be a year of cautious optimism. ■