



Terrence Sejnowski (President of the NeurIPS Board)

Welcome.

My name is Terrence Sejnowski. I am the president of the Neural Information Processing Systems Foundation. I am also the Francis Crick Professor at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, where I direct the Computational Neurobiology Laboratory, and I'm a distinguished professor at the University of California, San Diego.

Thank you all so much for being here online for the 34th annual NeurIPS conference.

I have had the privilege of being involved with this conference since the very beginning, and I've served as president of the board since 1993. We have grown and changed an immense amount in that time, going from a small invitation-only conference to an event attracting more than thirteen thousand attendees who have joined us last year, to a virtual event that has enabled an even larger worldwide audience this year.

The Neural Information Processing Systems Foundation is a non-profit corporation whose purpose is to organize an annual conference to foster insights into solving difficult problems by bringing together researchers from biological, psychological, technological, mathematical, and theoretical areas of science and engineering.

As artificial intelligence (AI) continues to evolve and interest in the field grows, it is vital that scientists and engineers come together to discuss research advances and their impact on society. For more than three decades this international conference has attracted researcher from many countries around the world and today it is now being held everywhere in the world through the internet.

NeurIPS is an established event, but the event, like other scientific endeavors, continues to evolve and progress. In the past, we have had to limit the number of attendees because of limits on meeting space, but this year we do not have these limits. The experience is different from an in-person conference but the high quality papers and talks remain the same.

The NeurIPS EXPO on Sunday highlighted the research of our sponsors. One half of all the support from our sponsors has been earmarked for travel awards to junior investigators and scholarships for unrepresented minorities and researchers from countries who previously could not attend NeurIPS.

Scientific progress demands the equal and open exchange of ideas. We are dedicated to creating a space where that can happen. Our conference, and our field, is experiencing intense public interest as it becomes clear that the tools developed from our research are immensely powerful and have the potential to help us build the world that we want.

But we can only make forward progress if we are able to hear the voices of not only of our colleagues who build these tools, but of those who use them and are impacted by them.

We continue to create a conference that provides the greatest diversity of thought and experiences for all attendees, offering a range of affinity group breakout sessions, and working to reach researchers throughout the world.

We are a stronger community for having undertaken these conversations. We continue to work through challenges presented to us together in an open manner. We strive to create an inclusive community of scientists and engineers, academics and industrial researchers to drive innovation in AI and ML.

And we'd like to thank all of you for helping us to build that conversation and dialog with the wider world.

We hope that having access to the research and researchers at the conference will provide you with valuable information to tell the important stories that will further the public's understanding of the research breakthroughs happening today that will impact the future.

NeurIPS 2021 is expected to be held physically in Sydney, Australia in December. The NeurIPS Foundation will announce its decision mid-year as to whether the event will be in person, hybrid or virtual.