

SPEAKER BIOS



Dominique Brossard **Professor, University of Wisconsin-Madison**

Dominique Brossard is a professor in the Department of Life Sciences Communication at the [University of Wisconsin-Madison](#) and an affiliate of the [UW-Madison Robert & Jean Holtz Center for Science and Technology Studies](#), the [UW-Madison Energy Institute](#), the [UW-Madison Global Health Institute](#), and the [UW-Madison Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies](#). She is also a principal investigator at the [Morgridge Institute for Research](#). She teaches courses in strategic communication theory and research, with a focus on science and risk communication, to undergraduate and graduate students, including those in the [Science Communication Ph.D. program](#). Brossard was Chair of the Department of Life Sciences Communication for 12 years.

Brossard's research agenda focuses on the intersection between science, media and policy with the [Science Communication Incubator Lab](#), which she co-directs.

A fellow of the [American Association for the Advancement of Science](#) and of the [International Communication Association](#), Brossard is an internationally known expert in public opinion dynamics related to controversial scientific issues. She is particularly interested in understanding the role of values in shaping public attitudes and using cross-cultural analysis to understand these processes. She has published more than 150 research articles in outlets such as *Science*, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *Science Communication*, *Public Understanding of Science*, the *International Journal of Public Opinion*, and *Communication Research* and has been an expert panelist for the [National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine \(NASEM\)](#) on various occasions.

Brossard has served extensively at the national and international level. Her recent service work includes serving on the NASEM Board of Life Sciences (2018-2024), the [Executive Committee of the Societal Experts Action Network](#) (SEAN – 2020-2025), and the Advisory Committee for the NASEM Division of Behavioral & Social Sciences & Education (DBASSE) before it was dissolved. She was on the Board of Directors of the [American Academy of Political and Social Sciences](#) from 2019 to 2025 and Chaired the Advisory Committee for the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences at the [National Science Foundation](#) for 2019 to 2024.

Brossard has a varied professional background that includes experience in the lab and the corporate world. Notably, she spent five years at Accenture in its Change Management Services Division. She was also the communication coordinator for the Agricultural Biotechnology Support Project II (ABSPII), a position that combined public relations with marketing communication and strategic communication. Her family worked dairy farms for many generations.

Brossard earned her M.S. in plant biotechnology from the Ecole Nationale d'Agronomie de Toulouse and her M.P.S. and Ph.D. in communication from Cornell University.

You can find a list of her publications on [Google Scholar](#).



CHRIS SCHAFFER

Professor, Dean of Faculty, Cornell University

Chris B. Schaffer is a professor in the Meinig School of Biomedical Engineering at Cornell University. He received his undergraduate degree in physics from the University of Florida and his Ph.D. in physics from Harvard University, where he worked with Eric Mazur. As a postdoc at the University of California at San Diego, Chris worked with David Kleinfeld in the physics and neuroscience programs. His lab at Cornell develops advanced optical techniques that enable quantitative imaging and targeted manipulation of individual cells in the central nervous system of rodents with the goal of identifying interactions among cells that cause neurological

disease. One area of current focus is the role of brain blood flow disruptions in the development of Alzheimer's disease. Prof. Schaffer is also active in developing novel educational strategies to teach science as a dynamic process for discovery. These approaches are used in outreach settings in middle and high-school science classes as well as in his undergraduate and graduate level courses. Chris also has a strong interest in science policy and spent a sabbatical in Washington, DC, working as a science policy advisor for Senator Edward Markey in the United States Congress.

Prof. Schaffer's lab develops and uses advanced optical techniques to observe and manipulate in vivo biological systems, with the goal of constructing a microscopic-scale understanding of normal and disease-state physiological processes in the central nervous system. The scientific questions the lab addresses center principally on elucidating the cellular-scale interactions that lead to brain cell dysfunction in neurological diseases. The lab develops novel optical methods that enable these problems to be attacked in ways not previously possible, and because many critical research questions involve interactions among different components of an organism (e.g. effect of altered blood flow on brain cell health) the focus is almost exclusively on in vivo approaches. In summary, the Schaffer lab's efforts center on in vivo experiments investigating the cellular dynamics that underlie neurological disease, supported by the development of novel optical techniques. The lab studies animal models of a variety of neurological diseases, including microvascular stroke, Alzheimer's disease, spinal cord injury, and epilepsy. Much of the lab's work focuses on developing an understanding of the role of cortical microvascular lesions in neurodegenerative disease, and the lab is a leader in the critical effort to determine the mechanisms by which occlusions or hemorrhages in small cortical blood vessels lead to the neuronal damage and neuroinflammation that may drive loss of cognitive function. In exciting new work, the lab is beginning to elucidate the pathways by which cortical microvascular dysfunction interacts with and exacerbates Alzheimer's disease. In addition, the lab has launched several new research directions in the last few years that center on other neurological conditions, such as spinal cord injury and epilepsy.

Select Awards and Honors

- James M. and Marsha D. McCormick Award for Outstanding Advising of First-Year Engineering Students from the College of Engineering 2023
- Kendall S. Carpenter Advising Award from Cornell University 2023
- Elected Fellow at Optica 2022
- Elected Fellow at the American Association for the Advancement of Science 2022
- Elected Fellow, American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering 2019
- Research Excellence Award, College of Engineering, Cornell University 2018
- Arthur H. Guenther Congressional Science Policy Fellowship, Optical Society of America and SPIE 2012