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SciCast Calls for Science, Technology Experts to Make Predictions

Largest sci-tech crowdsourcing forecast site in search of professionals and enthusiasts to predict future events

FAIRFAX, Va (June 18, 2014) – [SciCast](http://scicast.org), a research project run by George Mason University, is the largest known science and technology-focused crowdsourced forecasting site. So what makes a crowdsourced prediction market more powerful? An even bigger crowd. SciCast is launching its first worldwide call for participants to join the existing 2,300 professionals and enthusiasts ranging from engineers to chemists, from agriculturists to IT specialists.

Science and technology experts from universities, the private sector and professional organizations such as AAAS, IEEE, and ACS are making their predictions on SciCast (scicast.org), which strives to predict the future outcomes of popular science and technology topics. But SciCast isn't just for the professionally-trained, self-proclaimed geek. Anyone with an interest in related topics can move their way up the SciCast leaderboard by using up-to-date, relevant information and knowledge to make accurate predictions.

SciCast is based on the idea that the collective wisdom of an informed and diverse group is often more accurate at forecasting the outcome of events than that of one individual expert. Companies including Google, Ford Motor Company, and Procter & Gamble are using prediction markets to better understand industry trends and performance.

But SciCast takes crowdsourced predictions one step further, uniquely placing emphasis on relationships among questions and outcomes. "On SciCast, forecasts can influence each other," explains Charles Twardy, research assistant professor, George Mason University and a SciCast Principal Investigator. "For example, forecasters might think success for a new kind of solar cell depends on the price of a key material. On SciCast, they can make the chances of success depend on the material prices." Twardy adds, "Then when estimates of material prices change, SciCast automatically updates the success forecast."

As a community-driven site, participants are encouraged to make predictions and even submit their own questions. The questions are carefully vetted by the SciCast editorial team, and then published. Unlike a survey, participants can change their forecast at any time in reaction to new information. Once the answer to a question is known and made public, participants who answered correctly are rewarded and move up on the SciCast leaderboard. The more correct forecasts a participant makes, the more influence they'll have in other forecasts.

"Topic leaders", including Jessie Tenenbaum, PhD, Associate Director for Bioinformatics, DTMI Biomedical Informatics Core, generate questions focused on specific areas of interest. SciCast has provided an unmatched resource for individuals like Tenenbaum, whose focus on genomics has a defined audience. "Authoring questions for SciCast has been a useful focused activity with which to engage members of my professional working group. The exercise has also had the unanticipated benefit of helping us to identify and refine interesting areas for research and discussion," says Dr. Tenenbaum.

Examples of recent, highly active questions on SciCast include:

- [Will Google announce development of a smartwatch at or before the Google I/O 2014 Conference?](#)
- [Will Virgin Galactic begin commercial flights aboard SpaceShipTwo by the end of 2014?](#)
- [Will there be at least one major hurricane that makes US landfall in the 2014 hurricane season?](#)

Background:

Launched in 2014, [SciCast](#) is a federally-funded research project run by George Mason University to forecast the outcomes of key issues in science and technology. SciCast is based on the idea that the collective wisdom of an informed and diverse group is often more accurate at forecasting the outcome of events than that of one individual expert. The more than 2,300 SciCast participants represent academic institutions, professional associations, corporations, and federally-funded research centers, among other areas. Funding is provided by the [Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity](#) (IARPA). Visit [SciCast](#) to register for free, and make predictions.

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