An important article, written by a team of Argentine oceanographers and atmospheric scientists, appears in the latest issue of *Nature*. The scientists, after a ten-year study, have shown that changes in climate have altered ocean temperatures, circulation patterns, biogeochemistry, and storm patterns in the southern Atlantic. The team also found that algal production, eutrophication, and consequent alterations to the oceanic food chain affected fish populations by changing the percentage of predators, increasing toxic residues in food fish, and facilitating the spread of vector diseases.

Critical findings, absolutely! But to whom? Certainly other oceanographers, atmospheric scientists, and climatologists would find these revelations of great interest. They would speculate on whether the southern Atlantic phenomena might also prevail in other oceans.

In short, other than readers of *Nature*, who would notice these scientific results, and who would care? Even more importantly, who *should* notice and who *should* care?

Most often scientists are content to let their discoveries speak for themselves. But when such discoveries have the potential to affect human welfare—directly or indirectly—society becomes part of the experiment. What are some expected consequences of the southern Atlantic findings? Are different countries likely to experience these consequences? Which sectors will be most directly impacted? Which human, wildlife, and vegetation populations will be most at risk from the observed changes? Which public agencies, civil-society institutions, and communities are likely to have a stake in these climate-related developments? What policies, mitigation and adaptation strategies, and procedures should they consider adopting?

In short, if—after proper publicity and public information—a major workshop were to be held to discuss the new findings, who would want to attend? Certainly, the potential effects on foodfish populations would be of great interest to the fishing industry; the fishing regulation agencies (regional, national, and local); environmental NGOs concerned about seal, bird, and other wildlife populations; and community groups and health agencies worried about the consequences of infectious disease or toxicity. Other impacted sectors, such as agriculture and ranching, urban potable-water provision, land development, and transportation also would have representative stakeholders with strong interests in the research findings.

Investigating the societal consequences and institutional dimensions of physical-science discoveries are themselves scientific endeavors and should be part of any truly integrated climate-science effort such as the one to be undertaken by your UMI. A host of research questions thus follows directly from the findings of the *Nature* article. Developing ways to find answers to those questions should be part of the research agenda of scientific programs such as the one that led to the oceanic findings. These questions are important not only because they focus attention on societal problems and institutional arrangements that result from changes in the Earth’s physical systems, but because they serve to contextualize the scientific research itself—to elevate it to a point beyond “science for the sake of science,” making the research relevant, timely, and actionable.