

## MEET THE AMS

# Richard Clark

## 2022 AMS President

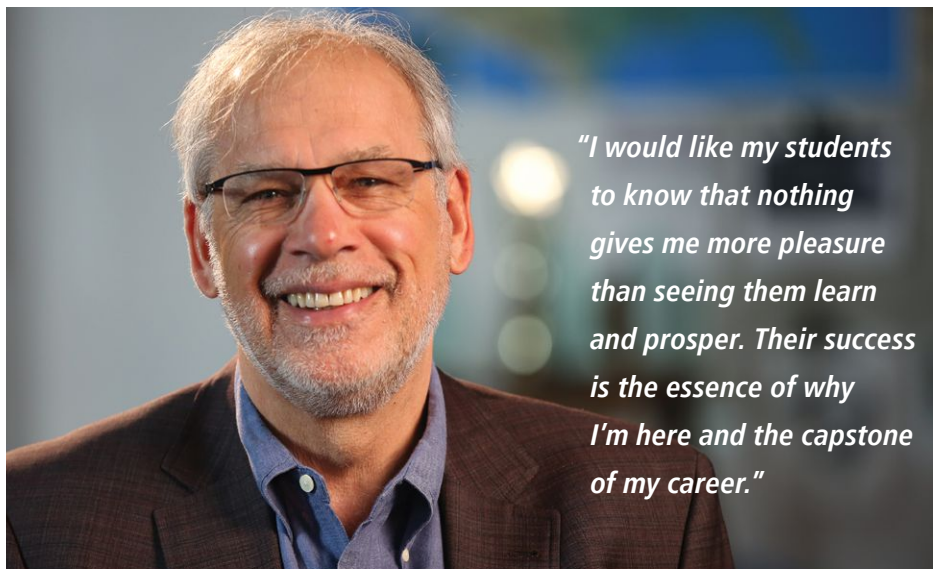
RICHARD CLARK'S involvement in AMS began as a graduate student and grew out of a desire to be an active participant in a professional society as well as an appreciation for its history and legacy.

"I knew of AMS having met Athelstan Spilhaus through his son Karl when I was a textile chemist and he the director of the Northern Textile Association," he remembers. "Since joining as a student member, I've had the privilege of serving with many dedicated members as part of boards, STACs, the AMS Council from 2008 to 2011, and now as AMS president."

Richard is an AMS Fellow and the recipient of the 2008 AMS Teaching Excellence Award (now the Edward N. Lorenz Teaching Excellence Award).

While being involved in AMS was a straightforward decision, according to Clark, a more circuitous route to this point in his career would be hard to envisage. Having a passionate interest in all things space since elementary school, he attended [Point Park College](#) as a first-generation Vietnam-era student pursuing majors in both chemistry and mathematics while working full-time to pay for college. Drafted into the U.S. Army, he spent his training as a meteorological observer at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma.

"My tour of duty at the White Sands Missile Range (WSMR) in New Mexico involved launching radiosondes in support of scientific experiments such as the Mars Viking Lander and high-altitude balloon-borne cosmic ray studies," Richard explains. "Being at WSMR gave me access to the base technical library where I must have read nearly every book on astrophysics, high-energy particle physics, and planetary science."



*"I would like my students to know that nothing gives me more pleasure than seeing them learn and prosper. Their success is the essence of why I'm here and the capstone of my career."*

Returning to college with a newfound sense of purpose—and funding through the GI bill—he finished his degrees and continued on to the graduate program in astronomy at Penn State, with a special interest in solar physics. But after three semesters of working full-time in order to pay tuition, he put graduate school on the back burner and spent the next seven years working as a textile and water-quality chemist, started a family, raised hogs, and was nearly self-sufficient on 20 acres in northern Pennsylvania.

His desire to pursue an advanced degree in atmospheric sciences led Richard back to school at the [University of Wyoming, where he worked under Tom Parish and Al Rodi.](#)

"Three days after arriving in Laramie, I was off to Ponca City, Oklahoma, to take part in an airborne investigation of the Great Plains Low-level Jet (GPLLJ)," Richard notes. "As a graduate student, the opportunity to fly on the Wyoming King Air research aircraft and have the responsibility of managing the data systems was exhilarating."

The data collected during the first summer constituted the bulk of the observations he used for both his M.S. and Ph.D. in atmosphere sciences.

“The four-plus years that I spent at Wyoming stands as one of the highlights of my life,” Richard says.

Today, Richard is 34 years into a career at Millersville University as a chair of the Department of Earth Sciences for 20 years, a professor of meteorology, and program coordinator for an M.S. in integrated scientific applications and a new graduate certification in space weather and environment: science, policy, and communication.

“I can honestly say that I’m as thrilled to walk into a classroom of undergraduate meteorology students and engage them on the topics of thermodynamics, radiative transfer, and boundary layers and turbulence as I was when I was a new faculty member,” he says. “Millersville has allowed me to engage in my passion for solar physics and astronomy by teaching a course for science education majors called Earth in Space, and an advanced course in space weather and environment, which serves as a capstone to our academic minor in heliophysics and space weather.”

Richard notes that “I owe much of my inroads into leadership positions to the late Russell DeSouza, who with the support of Rick Anthes, then UCAR president, brought Millersville into the UCAR/NCAR community through the UCAR Academic Affiliates Program (AAP).” After DeSouza passed away in 1997, Richard took on his position as AAP representative, which led to his involvement in Unidata.

“I always felt that receiving the 2006 Unidata Russell L. DeSouza Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Unidata Community was a tribute to *his* mentorship and a role model for how to become engaged in the community,” Richard says. “Over the years I’ve had meaningful opportunities to serve in leadership roles like chair of the NCAR Observing Facilities Advisory Panel, President’s Advisory Committee for University Relations, UCAR Advocacy for Science Committee, and as a two-term trustee-at-large to the UCAR Board of Trustees, the first from a non-Ph.D. institution for two terms.”

Richard notes he’s indebted to many people who along the way have provided encouragement and opportunity, including his mother, who would bear cold winter nights to join him at his small telescope and today at 101 years old is still his advocate and critic.

“I also want to acknowledge my wife and colleague, Sepi Yalda, whose advice and perspective gives me insight and balance, personally and professionally,” Richard adds. “And I would like my students to know that nothing gives me more pleasure than seeing them learn and prosper. Their success is the essence of why I’m here and the capstone of my career.”

Richard is grateful to the AMS community for providing him with the opportunity to serve as president.

“As your AMS president, my promise is to be your standard-bearer for the Society,” he states. “I will lead efforts to foster outreach and cross-sector collaboration across the enterprise; promote scientific breadth, diversity, equity, and inclusion; and help to stimulate opportunities for members, especially students. I believe that our shared imperative as a scientific society is to ensure that the next generation is prepared for a world where data profoundly influence every facet of the enterprise and that we continue to move in the direction where data are open, fully accessible, and free of biases. I’m looking forward to steering us through a year focusing on data in all its forms as we pursue the theme of ‘Data: Driving Science; Informing Decisions; Enriching Humanity.’”

—RACHEL S. THOMAS-MEDWID

**CONGRATULATIONS** to our new leaders, elected to guide the Society forward.

The results of the recent AMS elections are:

**2022 President-Elect:** Bradley R. Colman

**2022 Councilors:** Kristen Averyt, Mona Behl, Kandis Y. Boyd, Rachel Hauser, and Bernadette Woods Placky