



NYU

TANDON SCHOOL
OF ENGINEERING

PRESS OFFICE • 1 MetroTech Center, 19th Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11201

CONTACT • Karl Greenberg
646.997.3802 / mobile 646.519.1996
Karl.Greenberg@nyu.edu

Note: Images available at

https://nyutandon.photoshelter.com/galleries/C0000bm3nk9_B024/G00001bwJQ.jpgD4/I0000L0XQ7rnEyFo/GoVLab-FAS-Ask-a-Scientist-Site

Immediate Release

Scientists answer coronavirus questions on new website

The GovLab at NYU Tandon helps debunk misinformation and provide solid advice from the American Federation of Scientists

BROOKLYN, New York, Wednesday, March 18, 2020 – [Unreliable tips](#) on how to protect oneself from the novel coronavirus and [fake news](#) about the COVID-19 pandemic are spreading as quickly as the virus itself.

The [Governance Lab](#) (The GovLab) at the [New York University Tandon School of Engineering](#) has collaborated with the [Federation of American Scientists](#) (FAS) and the [State of New Jersey Office of Innovation](#) to launch a free, interactive tool aimed at cutting through the noise and presenting clear, scientist-led, and evidence-based information and advice to the public.

Available in English and Spanish, "[Ask a Scientist](#)," allows users to find answers to a wide range of commonly asked questions about the virus, the severity of the outbreak, best methods of prevention, and steps to take in the event you fall ill. All posted content is obtained from the [World Health Organization](#), the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), and other rigorously verified sources.

If users do not find an answer to their specific questions, they have the option of submitting them to a team of FAS researchers and a crowdsourced network of vetted science experts led by the [National Science Policy Network](#). Users can expect an answer within an hour, although that timeframe is

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expected to shorten as the network increases in size. Every answer is reviewed to ensure accuracy and timeliness, then added to the knowledge base for the benefit of others.

“We are getting all hands on deck and engaging a global volunteer network of scientists, journalists and other experts to lend their know-how to provide rapid and accurate information that will help slow the spread of this disease and mitigate its impact,” says Professor [Beth Simone Noveck](#), director of The GovLab and Chief Innovation Officer for the State of New Jersey.

Immediately after going live six days ago, “Ask a Scientist” began attracting some 4,000 users a day, and the collaborating teams are now focused on increasing the robustness of the infrastructure to handle the growing volume of queries, including crowdsourcing translation in a wide variety of languages, such as Portuguese, Farsi, and Malagasy. Many public and private organizations are installing the “Ask a Scientist feature” on their own websites as well.

“Ask a Scientist” will also be live on the Amazon Alexa by the end of the week. Just say "Alexa, Ask a Scientist," followed by a COVID-19 question to access the service by voice.

“Since its inception, The GovLab has been dedicated to serving the public good,” says Jelena Kovačević, dean of the NYU Tandon School of Engineering. “I have watched with pride and admiration as Professor Noveck and her team sprang into action to help disseminate vital information to the public. As we find ourselves in the uncharted waters of a global pandemic, they are harnessing the power of science, data, and crowdsourcing to help us all navigate through this crisis.”

About The Governance Lab

The mission of The Governance Lab at the NYU Tandon School of Engineering is to improve people’s lives by changing the way we govern. Our goal at The GovLab is to strengthen the ability of institutions — including but not limited to governments — and people to work more openly, collaboratively, effectively, and legitimately to make better decisions and solve public problems. We believe that increased availability and use of data, new ways to leverage the capacity, intelligence, and expertise of people in the problem-solving process, combined with new advances in technology and science, can transform governance. For more information, visit thegovlab.org.

About the New York University Tandon School of Engineering

The NYU Tandon School of Engineering dates to 1854, the founding date for both the New York University School of Civil Engineering and Architecture and the Brooklyn Collegiate and Polytechnic Institute (widely known as Brooklyn Poly). A January 2014 merger created a comprehensive school of education and research in engineering and applied sciences, rooted in a tradition of invention and entrepreneurship and dedicated to furthering technology in service to society. In addition to its main location in Brooklyn, NYU Tandon collaborates with other schools within NYU, one of the country’s foremost private research universities, and is closely connected to engineering programs at NYU Abu Dhabi and NYU Shanghai. It operates Future Labs focused on start-up businesses in downtown Manhattan and Brooklyn and an award-winning online graduate program. For more information, visit <http://engineering.nyu.edu>.

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