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Dr. Flagan is renowned for his contributions to the state of the art for aerosol measurements. He invented the scanning mobility particle sizer (SMPS) that has become the standard method for measurement of size distributions in the study of submicron particles, and has contributed numerous other instruments. He is probing the distribution of airborne allergens.

He has published over 286 scientific papers, a textbook: Fundamentals of Air Pollution Engineering, and has 16 patents. He has received numerous awards for his aerosol research including the Fuchs Award in 2006, the highest award in the field of aerosol science which is given by American Association for Aerosol Research, Gesellschaft für Aerosolforschung, and Japan Association for Aerosol Science and Technology, and the American Chemical Society Award for Creative Advances in Environmental Science and Technology in 2007. He has also received a Doctorate of Technology, honoris causa from Lund University in Sweden (2004), the Thomas Baron Award in Fluid Particle Systems from the American Institute of Chemical Engineers (1997), the David Sinclair Award of the American Association for Aerosol Research (1993), and the Marion Smoluchowski Award of the Gesellschaft für Aerosolforschung (1990), and is a Fellow of the American Association for Aerosol Research (2008). In 2010 he became a member of the National Academy of Engineering.

Dr. Flagan earned his B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Michigan, and his M.S. and Ph.D. from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, also in Mechanical Engineering.