

## ORAL PRESENTATION GUIDELINES

On the strength of your application, you may be selected to make an oral presentation about your research at the Celebration of Undergraduate Scholarship. If selected for this honor, you are still required to prepare a poster presentation.

When planning for your oral presentation, please keep the following considerations in mind. Length: Keep within your allotted time. Each presentation will last no more than fifteen minutes (ten minutes plus five minutes for questions and answers), with five minutes between each presentation allotted for changing equipment, if needed. If you intend to answer questions about your research during your talk, you must include time for it within the ten-minute limit, which means that your actual presentation may run only six or seven minutes. Practice your presentation by delivering it to someone who can time it and provide constructive criticism to insure that it runs no longer than ten minutes. Because the amount of time available to all presenters is strictly limited, you will be stopped if you exceed the time limit. If this happens, simply say, "I see my time has expired. Thank you for your attention," and return to your seat. Organization and Structure: Make it easy for your listeners to follow your thoughts.

1. Have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. If you are not experienced at this, it is a good idea to write your opening and your closing word-for-word so that you know exactly how you will begin and end, and then read it just that way. Whatever you say, keep it brief. Two to three sentences for each segment are all you need in this situation. Knowing how to start and stop is a great confidence booster and clears your mind to concentrate on the substance of your presentation.

2. Give the body of your remarks a clear structure and let your listeners know what that structure is. Divide the body in parts. You can have at least two parts and, given your time limits, probably not more than four. The body could answer the following questions:

What problem did you investigate?

What was your thesis?

What methodology did you use?

What were your findings?

Clearly indicate by a phrase or sentence when you have finished one segment and are moving to the next.

3. Forget jokes or other attempts at humor unless you have a guaranteed laugh-getter relevant to your research that you know that you can deliver well enough to get it across. Your listeners want to hear about your research and your time is limited.

Content and Language: Stick to the subject. Your presentation should be about your research. That may sound obvious but the temptation to digress into interesting side issues or your feelings and frustrations can be overwhelming even for experienced scholars. Keep your language simple, clear, and not too technical. If you must introduce a few technical terms, then, as briefly as possible, define those terms for the majority of the audience who do not know what they mean. If you are using slides, overhead projections, or electronic media, check and double check them to be sure that you have all of them, have them in the right

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order, and have them in the right position. Delivery: Speak to someone, speak out, speak slowly, and stand still. You will be nervous, perhaps very nervous. Use that nervousness to your advantage.

1. Project it out to the audience - A time-tested trick of the trade is to pick out one person near you, another person halfway back, and one person in the back row. Alternate looking at each of these three people directly and deliver the entire presentation to them. Forget that there are other people in the room. The effect of this trick will be to make everyone in the room feel as if you are speaking personally to him or her. Speak to someone.
2. Another effect of nervousness is to speak too softly. Nothing will annoy your audience more than not being able to hear you. Even when you are looking at the person near you, continue speaking to the person in the back row. If that person can hear you, everyone can hear you. Fortunately, you will be in a medium-sized room, so you will not have to shout. Speak out.
3. Another effect of nervousness is to speak too rapidly. We Americans tend to speak too quickly in any case, and when we are in conversation we tend to speak quite rapidly. The conversational rate of speech will not do for an oral presentation. Speak a little more slowly than feels natural to you. A slower pace also helps you speak more clearly because you enunciate your words more carefully. The right pace helps the audience follow your thoughts more easily. Slow down.
4. Another effect of nervousness is to fidget. Fidgeting can easily distract an audience. Practice speaking with your feet planted and with your hands still at your sides. It will feel unnatural, but it looks great, it will make what gestures you do you use more effective, and it will keep your audience's attention on your ideas. Stand still.

Dress: Wear professional attire appropriate for an academic conference. If you have doubts about what this means, ask your faculty sponsor for advice.

Audience: Be positive. Your listeners want you to succeed. You are the expert on your research and they want to learn from you. If you do well, they will feel that their time has been well spent.

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