GRADUATE STUDENT WORKSHOP

FACULTY PERSPECTIVES ON CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

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TYPES OF CONFERENCES

National Society/Association
Regional
Specialty
University
OVERVIEW OF A TYPICAL SOCIETY

Society of Toxicology
~10,000 members throughout the world

Membership

Regional Chapters

Gulf Coast
Mid West
South East
South Central
North West

Regional Meetings
Regional Meetings
Regional Meetings
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Regional Meetings

Specialty Meetings

NATIONAL MEETING
Every March
Typically large (4,000-10,000 participants)

Affiliated with a Society that has International membership

4-5 days in length

Organized at least a year in advance with large program

Typically, presentation submissions are due 4-6 months before the conference date
• Selection for placement and oral sessions are highly competitive

• Many types of sessions happening simultaneously

• Lots of activity, but high exposure

• Graduate Student specific activities

• Membership provides incentives and opportunities
REGIONAL

- Much smaller than a large Society meeting (<1000 participants)
- May be affiliated with a larger Society
- Usually only 1.5-2 days
- Organized up to a year in advance
- Submissions are due closer to the date of the meeting
- Sessions are limited and do not overlap
- Much better chance for substantial one-on-one interactions
SPECIALTY

• Small intimate meeting on a very specific area or topic
• May be affiliated with a larger Society
• Can be short (1-2 days) or up to 6 days for a Gordon-type conference
• Submissions are due closer to the date of the meeting
• Sessions are limited and do not overlap
• Much better chance for substantial one-on-one interactions
UNIVERSITY SETTING

- Held in the confines of the University
- May involve many disciplines
- Usually only ½ -1 day
- Short turn around for submissions
- Sessions are limited and do not overlap
- Allows interaction with fellow students and faculty
SELECTING A CONFERENCE

There are many considerations when choosing a conference

Be sure to assess what it is you want to accomplish
SELECTING A CONFERENCE

• Considerations
  – Membership in the Society or Association
  – Presentation at the major conference in your field with your major professor
  – Ability to network with possible collaborators
  – Your first presentation at a smaller meeting
  – Need for an intense focused scientific experience
  – Location and cost
SELECTING A CONFERENCE

Be realistic in what you expect to accomplish
A large conference usually has a variety of different sessions.

Most oral sessions at large meetings are preset before the meeting and require selection by the program committee.
The number of sessions at smaller conferences are usually more limited but may be open to students. However, prestigious meetings such as Gordon Conferences typically do not allow oral student presentations.
Most meeting break up the day in 3-3.5 hr sections. The various types of sessions are then fit into these segments:

- **8:30-12:00**
  - Lunch
- **1:00-4:30**

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TYPES OF CONFERENCE SESSIONS

• SYMPOSIA
  – Four-five 30-45 minute oral sessions that are feature sessions of a National meeting
  – Presentations are typically in a focused area of the discipline
  – Symposia sessions are typically presented by top scholars and rarely are presented by a student
  – Symposia are organized and submitted months in advance of the meeting and go through a selection process by the Program Committee
TYPES OF CONFERENCE SESSIONS

• MINI-SYMPOSIA or PLATFORM SESSIONS
  – Usually there are 8-12 presentations that are 15-20 minutes each
  – These sessions are typically organized by the program committee based on the submitted abstracts
  – The topic area may be varied but usually there is a “theme” that runs through session
  – Presenters can be students, post-docs or established investigators
  – The chair of the session may be a top scholar
TYPES OF CONFERENCE SESSIONS

• WORKSHOPS
  – Many societies have sessions that are classified as workshops
  – A selection of oral presentations designed to provide information on the “HOW”. Less about specific research and more about method
  – Has the same basic criteria as the symposia
TYPES OF CONFERENCE SESSIONS

• POSTER SESSIONS
  – The major presentation component of most meetings
  – Work is displayed for 3-4 hrs with a great deal of intense interaction
  – May be up to 600 other posters displayed at the same time
  – Usually 90 minutes are set aside to attend the poster
TYPES OF CONFERENCE SESSIONS
TYPES OF CONFERENCE SESSIONS
• **POSTER SESSIONS**
  – Posters are typically grouped so that similar research is presented at the same time. This allows the direct interaction with colleagues and competitors
  – The majority of posters are presented by students
  – Many societies may have awards for the best posters (*usually you must be a member*)
Typically a student will be able to present a Poster or a Platform and can indicate their choice when the abstract is submitted.

Poster sessions provide the best opportunity for interactions due to the time allotted and the number of attendees that will come by.
All meetings will require the submission of a short abstract.

There is typically a cost ($40-50).

Submissions are typically electronic.

Most large National meetings have submission deadlines 6 MONTHS prior to the meeting.
Students should work closely with their major professor on the writing and submission of any abstract.

In the natural and physical sciences the major professor should have their names on any submission and many submit the abstract.
FUNDING FOR THE MEETING

Most research faculty attend at least one large National meeting in their discipline each year.

The faculty member is typically a member of the society or association that sponsors the meeting.

Many will take their more senior students who are presenting work at the meeting.
FUNDING FOR THE MEETING

If the student has a major professor, funding for the conference should come from the major professor.

If the project is related to a grant, there should be specific travel money set aside.
FUNDING FOR THE MEETING

In the event that the major professor cannot support attending the conference, there are several options

- Departmental Funds
- Program Funds
- Student Council (GPSC)
- **Society Funds** *(only if the student is a member)*
Visit the USF Graduate School website and access the FUNDING FOR RESEARCH Link for a comprehensive list of agencies that fund graduate student research

http://www.grad.usf.edu/opportunities-for-gradstudent.asp
The conference will provide specifics on the size of the poster and the date and time that it is to be presented.

I have presented a previous workshop on the organization and layout of a poster that is available on the graduate school website.
PREPARING FOR THE POSTER PRESENTATION

• Know the level of the audience
  – When in doubt set the bar lower

• Keep everything simple
  – Avoid excessive jargon and acronyms

• Break up the poster into sections
  – Provide a defined question or hypothesis for each section
PREPARING FOR THE POSTER PRESENTATION

• Speak slowly, clearly and LOUD!!!!

• Make eye contact and do not read your poster with you back to the audience. Move around if possible (different sides of the poster)

• No “Umm”, “Like”, “OK”, “You know”, “Again”

• Everyone gets nervous before they speak
PREPARING FOR THE POSTER PRESENTATION

• Show some enthusiasm and excitement for your work!!!!

• Be aware that no one should know your results better than you do!!

• If you don’t know, SAY YOU DON’T KNOW. NEVER EVER TRY AND BS SOMEONE

• Relax and have fun (if presenting is a horror, you are in big trouble)
PREPARING FOR THE POSTER PRESENTATION

• PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

• Fellow students

• Yourself

• Family

• Be able to give a concise overview in 10 MINUTES!
PREPARING FOR THE ORAL PRESENTATION

• STAY ON TIME!!!!
  – 15 minutes means 15 minutes!!!

• PRACTICE OFTEN

• DO NOT USE NOTES

• SIMPLICITY IN DESIGN AND DELIVERY
A large National meeting can be one of the most intimidating experiences simply due to the sheer size and number of sessions that are available.

Before you depart, spend some time mapping out your itinerary for the entire conference.

(some societies provide a CD of all the sessions with a planner)
PREPARING TO ATTEND THE MEETING

• You can’t do it all!

• Select a mixture of sessions
  – Every session will have a specific time

• Chose to see specific topics, techniques, individuals

• Map out a day-to-day schedule

• Make a point to try and meet some of the people who’s papers you have read (your major professor should help facilitate this)
PREPARING TO ATTEND THE MEETING

• Take some time off
  – There is usually one day where there is not a lot that you want to see. Give yourself a break

• Split up!
  – If a number of individuals are attending with you, do not attend the same sessions. This will allow a better coverage of the meeting and discussion later on.

• Participate in Student events
  – Lunch with an expert
  – Breakout sessions
  – Continuing education and professional development
PREPARING TO ATTEND THE MEETING

WHAT TO TAKE WITH YOU FOR YOUR PRESENTATION

- Business cards
- A print out of your poster to hand out (especially if it is published)
- A notepad
- Water

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PREPARING TO ATTEND THE MEETING

HOW TO DRESS

Always dress in a professional manner
Males, a suit is best, but as a minimum slacks and a nice collared shirt
Females, suit, slacks and professional blouse, business dress (NEVER shorts)
A critical aspect of the meeting is the ability to network with other professionals as well as students.

Be sure to have business cards, even if you simply print some of your own.
A classy move is to follow up to people you have met with an email or letter (depending on the stature of the individual)

Your objective may be to make sure that the individual remembers you for future networking or job opportunities
If a number of individuals have traveled to the meeting with you and your major professor, be prepared to report on your experiences and note the key issues that you have identified.
PANEL DISCUSSION

Sondra Fogel, PhD
Social Work
Ken Buckle, PhD
Engineering
Waynne James, PhD
Education
Rick Pollenz, PhD
Cell and Molecular Biology

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