



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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A Checklist for Conference Presenters

After developing an idea, submitting an abstract, and waiting for a reply, you finally have your presentation proposal accepted. Congratulations! Here are some tips for making a strong, effective presentation.

Avoid the Pitfalls

- Avoid nesting in one spot. Find at least three strategic presentation points and move among them.
- Move or gesture only when you want to emphasize a particular point.
- Use overheads (if applicable) to make main points. Additional information belongs in handouts.
- Avoid "busy" graphics. Keep the focal points clear. If necessary, enlarge pertinent information, and give only brief examples of data. Put complete data in handouts.
- Do not read from a script. Use notes only for quick reference.

Accentuate the Positives

- Provide an organized packet of handouts to support your presentation and distribute it at the beginning.
- Organize your presentation into an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. It is always helpful if the introduction has an attention-getter.
- Arrive early to make certain that your audiovisuals can be clearly seen and/or heard anywhere in the presentation room. Bad audiovisuals are worse than no audiovisuals at all. Type any visuals with a font size no smaller than 24.
- Address your audience as colleagues. Maintain eye contact and a friendly tone of voice. Be flexible and facilitative.
- Encourage audience involvement. Accept questions during your presentation and allow time for question or comments at the end.
- Offer positive suggestions as to how participants may apply your information to their classrooms, advisement, counseling, etc. Many suggestions will fit most effectively into your handouts.
- Speak in concise English. Define any terms or

acronyms that may be unclear to any members of your audience.

- Include as much extra information as you want in your handouts. Your presentation has a time limit; your handouts are limited only by your copy budget!
- Include a bibliography of references.
- Your information was exciting enough that the proposal referees decided someone would want to hear it; let your own enthusiasm justify that decision. Relax and enjoy your presentation. People attend because they want to learn something from you. Make their experience (and yours) both instructive and pleasant.

* * *

The way that an audience receives a conference session depends as much upon effective presentation techniques as upon the strength of the ideas. Make your presentation and your ideas shine!

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proposal form, call (512) 471-7545*



Plan to Retain Students

Student retention is a universal concern, and faculty need a personal, proactive plan for retaining students. The following tips help faculty create and document their own retention strategy/plan.

- Set a positive tone from the first class session. Set high expectations for yourself and for your students. Use students' names from the start. Make certain that students know your name, where your office is, what office hours you maintain, and your office phone number. Encourage students to contact you outside of class. (For part-time faculty, how is it best to contact you? The division office? At home?)
- Distribute and collect student data. Ask for the standard name-rank-serial number and course-specific information, but also for potentially more useful information such as "What is it you especially want me to know about you?" Use that student information to best advantage.
- Continuously encourage students to make good grades. Good grades—and the hard work and commitment that it takes to earn them—are accurate predictors of success in attaining college/career/personal goals.
- Give positive strokes to all students. Invoking and applauding active student involvement can stimulate dramatic effects. Praise is powerful.
- Telephone students whose absences are likely to negatively affect their grades. Convey your sincere concern.
- Advise students about any study skills or test-taking seminars that are being offered and encourage them to attend. (You may be influential in having those seminars scheduled at a time convenient for your students. You may even volunteer to facilitate one of those seminars.)
- Encourage students to form mutual aid societies/study groups. Peer pressure of the positive kind can have multiple benefits.
- Conduct individual midterm conferences in private. These personal touch conferences should provide students with a status report of their progress in the course, elicit concerns/problems students may have in order to take corrective action (if possible), and give students encouragement to persevere and succeed.
- Offer to help students contact their advisors to enroll in their next courses rather than enrolling during open registration. One of the benefits of

registering with an advisor is that an on-the-spot transcript audit can be conducted to verify/alert students of their progress toward achieving their college goals.

- When submitting final grades, write your best students a note telling them how you appreciated their positive contributions to the success of the course and that you look forward to seeing them back on campus.

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