UCI UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM
ORAL PRESENTATION GUIDELINES

The 2021 UCI Undergraduate Research Symposium will take place online on Friday, May 21, 2021. Undergraduate researchers will have the opportunity to present their work to an audience of faculty, fellow students, corporate partners, and community members. Hundreds of oral and poster presentations make the Symposium an exciting celebration of the undergraduate research culture at UCI.

The Symposium will be hosted on the Whova online platform. Student presenters will receive e-mails from Whova with a unique link to register on the platform. Oral presentations will take place during meetings on Zoom, via a Zoom link that will be provided via Whova.

PREPARING AND GIVING YOUR PRESENTATION

In this virtual environment, the standard way of making an oral presentation is to use PowerPoint to present a few slides while you talk over them in a Zoom session. The audience will follow you expecting you to talk from one to three minutes per slide. Your presentation could reasonably use from a few to up to about 7 slides.

You are allotted 10 minutes total for your presentation, including a short question and answer period. We recommend that you plan your presentation for a **maximum of 7 minutes,** to allow time for Q&A. A faculty moderator keeps track of your presentation time and will also facilitate the discussion.

Preparing an Effective Presentation

An effective presentation is more than just standing up and giving information. A presenter must consider how best to communicate their information to the audience. Use these tips to create a presentation that is both informative and interesting.

Be simple. Clearly establish a single focus for your presentation and eliminate anything that doesn't directly support that focus.

Organize your thoughts. Start with an outline and develop good transitions between sections. Emphasize the real-world significance of your research.

Have a strong opening. Why should the audience listen to you? One good way to get their attention is to start with a question, whether or not you expect an answer.

Define terms early. If you are using terms that may be new to the audience, introduce them early in your presentation. Once an audience gets lost in unfamiliar terminology, it is extremely difficult to get them back on track.

Finish with a bang. Find one or two sentences that sum up the importance of your research. How is the world better off as a result of what you have done, and what impact has it had on you?

Design slides to introduce important information. Consider doing a presentation without slides. Then consider which points you cannot make without them. Create only those slides that are necessary to improve your communication with the audience.

Consider questions you might be asked. Show your materials friends, co-researchers, and people who are not familiar with your topic. See what questions they have and prepare short answers for them.

Time yourself. Do not wait until the last minute to time your presentation. You only have 10 minutes total, so plan your presentation for 7 minutes or less, to allow time for Q&A within your 10 minute time slot.

Create effective notes for yourself. Have notes that you can read. Use an outline or other brief reminders of what you want to say.

Practice, practice, practice. The more you practice your presentation, the more comfortable you will be in front of an audience. Practice in front of other people and ask for feedback. Record yourself and watch and listen to it critically. Make it better and do it again.

PowerPoint Tips

Use minimal text. Use bullet points, not complete sentences. The text on your slide provides an outline to what you are saying. A common standard is the 6/7 rule: no more than six bulleted items per slide and no more than seven words per item.

Use a large font. As a general rule, avoid text smaller than 24 point.

Use a clean typeface. Sans serif typefaces, such as Arial or Calibri, are generally easier to read on a screen than serifed typefaces, such as Times New Roman.

Use contrasting colors. Use a dark text on a light background or a light text on a dark background. Avoid red/green combinations, as this is the most common form of color blindness.

Use special effects sparingly. Using animations, cool transition effects, sounds and other special effects is an effective way to make sure the audience notices your slides, but use them only when they are necessary to make a point.

Presenting Effectively

Use these tips to help keep the audience interested throughout your presentation.

Be excited. If you remember to be excited, your audience will feel it and automatically become more interested.

Speak with confidence. You are the authority on your topic, but do not pretend that you know everything. If you do not know the answer to a question, admit it. Consider deferring the question to your mentor or offer to look into the matter further.

Engage your audience. Consider how to consistently maintain your audience's interest. For example, asking occasional rhetorical questions engages their minds in considering their possible answers to the questions.

Avoid reading from the screen. If you are reading from the screen, you are not connecting with your audience.

Explain your equations and graphs. When you display equations, explain them fully, but briefly. Point out all constants and dependent and independent variables. With graphs, tell how they support your point. Explain the x- and y-axes and show how the graph progresses from left to right.

Pause. Pauses add audible structure to your presentation. They emphasize important information, make transitions obvious, and give the audience time to catch up between points and to read new slides. Practice counting silently to three (slowly) between points.

Avoid filler words. Um, like, you know, and many others. To an audience, these are indications that you do not know what to say; you sound uncomfortable. Speak slowly enough that you can collect your thoughts before moving ahead.

Relax. It is hard to relax when you are nervous, but your audience will be much more comfortable if you are too.

Breathe. It is fine to be nervous. To keep your nerves in check, practice your presentation many times, and remember to breathe deeply throughout your presentation.

Acknowledge the people who supported your research. Be sure to thank the people who made your research possible, including your mentor, research team, collaborators, and other sources of funding and support.

Keep your answers short and to the point. Time will go by quickly, so you want to be able to deal with as many questions as possible within that time. If you don't know the answer to a question, admit it. Consider asking for contact information for the questioner. Then you can look into the answer and provide it to them after the event.

Presenting Online

All of the elements discussed above are important whether your audience is in the room with you or watching remotely. However, there are some unique factors to consider when delivering a remote presentation. Use these tips to ensure that you use the remote format effectively.

Consider your environment. When setting up, consider what your audience will see and hear. Try to find a place that is free from outside noise and eliminate as much clutter as possible from within the camera's view. Avoid having bright sources of outdoor light behind you and block windows that create sharp contrasts on your image and background.

Test your equipment beforehand. Use the controls in the Zoom app to test and adjust your audio and video equipment (click the arrow next to microphone or camera in the bottom left of the screen to access audio and video menus).

Run a test meeting. You can create a test meeting in Zoom (http://zoom.us/test) that will let you test your audio and video setup and your internet connection before your Zoom meeting. See the Zoom website for more information: (https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/115002262083-Joining-a-test-meeting).

Close other programs. Close programs running in the background to prevent interruptions by app notifications, and turn off your phone, or put it on silent. This will limit your distractions.

Share well. Open all of the files you want to share (PowerPoint, videos, etc.) before you share your screen. Then, when you do share your screen, consider selecting your entire screen, so that you can easily jump between each medium, rather than having to do a "new share" each time. Be sure that your screen only displays things you wish to share. If you're playing an audio file (or video with sound), select "Music or Computer Sound Only" from the Advanced screen sharing menu before sharing your screen.

Stop the screen share occasionally to refocus the attention of the audience on you and your message during important transitions.

Look at the camera. It's important to maintain your connection to your audience by looking at the camera, not at the faces on the screen. It is best if the camera is slightly higher than eye level, perhaps just above the screen.

PRESENTATION RESOURCES

These Guidelines offer an overview of how to create an excellent presentation, and how to present it effectively to your audience. There are many other resources with more detailed information. Here are several good ones:

10 Tips for Giving Effective Virtual Presentations

Best Practices for Virtual Presentations

How to properly present PowerPoint slides in Zoom