Attending Research Conferences Successfully

Office of Undergraduate Research
with the
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What is a research conference

- Gathering of academics of all levels
- Professional Organization Representatives
- Can be local or in a new destination
- Can be national or international
- Can be in-person or virtual
- Can be multiple days
- Can be one day
- Can be in a new destination
- Can be local or national
What kind of events happen?

Research Presentations:
- From Professionals
- From Students
- Poster Presentations
- Talk Presentations

Professional Development Sessions

Exhibit Hall Tabling:
- Vendors
- Recruitment from Students

●
Conferences tend to have a focus on the area of interest:

- **Major/Field of Study**, for example:
  - Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Physics (SACNAS)
  - Population demographers, for example:
    - National Political Caucuses
  - Professional area of work, for example:
    - Society of Professional Journalists
  - Shared interest, for example:
    - National Political Caucuses
    - Society of Professional Journalists
    - American Physical Society
  - Major/Field of Study, for example:
    - National Political Caucuses

Content
Why should you attend?

- Opportunity to share your knowledge with others
- Learn from others
- Network
- Network
- Network
- Learn about grad programs
- Learn about summer research internships
- Learn about what you don’t know (you don’t know what you don’t know)
- Make new friends

Often students who have never attended a conference feel very nervous. Often students, after their 1st conference, feel like it has been a life changing experience.
Who here has attended a conference before?

What were your experiences?

What did you like?

What didn’t you like?

What advice would you give to others for their first time?
How to prepare for a conference

- Conference Agendas and Conference Information are posted online well in advance.
  - Go to the website and explore!
  - Explore the agenda
  - Find sessions that sound interesting to you and go to them
  - Plan your days
  - Think about what your needs are
  - What topics do you get excited about?
  - Read the Codes of Conduct
  - What do you think about what your needs are
  - Be respectful and understand what the conference expects of you in terms of respecting others
  - Be aware of your surroundings and make sure you are always taking precautions for your own safety
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Advance

Conferences
How to prepare: Talk with your professors, program directors, peers, advisors

Most of us are excited to work with our students to help them prepare.

Can they help you prepare for a conference?

Professors that you do work with often have funding

Major programs

Student programs

Office of Undergraduate Research

YES!!! Lots of offices on campus support students to attend conferences

Does campus have support for students to travel to conferences?

Membership dues for reduced rates

Presentation submission deadlines

Yes, many institutions have support for students to attend conferences from the organizations themselves

A lot of opportunities for students to attend conferences from the organizations

Travel Scholarships (flight, hotel, transportation, food stipend)

Are there deadlines that you should be aware of (explore the website)

What conferences do they know of that might be appropriate for you to attend?

A lot of conferences, talk with your professors, program directors, peers, advisors

Ask them:

- What conferences do they know of that might be appropriate for you to attend?
- Are there deadlines that you should be aware of (explore the website)?
- Travel Scholarships (flight, hotel, transportation, food stipend)
- Membership dues for reduced rates
- Presentation submission deadlines
- Yes, many institutions have support for students to attend conferences from the organizations themselves
- A lot of opportunities for students to attend conferences from the organizations
- Can they help you prepare for a conference?
If you are presenting

Start developing your presentation early so you can practice

Practice with your friends and your family

Learn the language of the topic you are working on

Practice with your friends and your family

Make sure you know the day, time, and location of where/when your presentation is

Poster presentations are different than talk presentations

Make sure to ask your advisor to help you understand what to expect during your presentation

It should be more fun and exciting kind of nerves as opposed to fear...at least that is the goal

If you are presenting
Who here has presented at a conference before?
What it a talk or a poster presentation?
What was it like?
Would you do it again?
If you are not presenting,

- Be engaged.
- Attend the professional development sessions.
  - Do not focus on the negative; it helps no one to only hear how they messed up.
  - Be positive and give constructive feedback.
  - Support other students.
  - Support friends you are attending with.
- Attend student presentations.
  - You are there to deepen your knowledge and to make connections.
  - Do not treat conferences like a vacation.
- Explore the exhibit halls (often a lot of free swag, and don't be shy...take all).
- Attend student presentations.
  - Support friends you are attending with.
- Be positive and give constructive feedback.
- Resume building.
  - Personal statements.
  - Scholarship/fellowship/grant workshops.
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  - Resume building.
How to Prepare: Know yourself and your habits

Do you get overwhelmed?

- Build in breaks

Are you a morning person?

- Practice active listening or asking questions of others
- Pay attention to how you are engaging with others. If you are talking more than everyone else,

Are you an extrovert?

- Pay attention to how you are engaging with others. If you are talking more than everyone else,

- Conserve your energy

Are you an introvert?

- If so, practice introducing yourself so you are comfortable with the word and phrases

Are you a shy person?

- If not, what steps can you take to overcome your morning struggles?

Are you morning person?

- Build in breaks

Do you get overwhelmed easily?

- Work with Student Psychological Services as they have free workshops and trainings on how
- Practice active listening or asking questions of others

Elevator Statements

- Imagine you step onto an elevator and someone you admire walks in behind you?

○ In the time it takes to go from the 1st floor to say the 5th floor, how would you introduce yourself?

- Who are you, what do you do, and why should that person care?

■ What is exciting about the work you do?

■ How does that connect to the broader society?

○ Why should that person care?

■ Think about why your voice matters in the field.

What one thing should the person remember you for? (your hook)

○ Think about why your voice matters in the field.

- Who are you, what do you do, and why should that person care?

○ Are you trying to apply for a summer program?

■ Are you trying to apply for a scholarship?

■ Are you trying to learn about something?

■ Are you trying to apply for a scholarship?

○ Think about your ask?

- In the time it takes to go from the 1st floor to say the 5th floor, how would you introduce yourself?
Let's practice:
Who are you?
What do you do?
Why should your partner care?
(what are your goals can be a good start)

These are kind of like ice breakers but so
much more because of the impact they can
have on getting you the things you need or
want!
How to Prepare: Attire

Pay attention to the weather and time of year as well as environment and pack accordingly (if conference is not local)

Make sure to attend to your hygiene!

Rule of thumb: If people are paying more attention to what you are wearing, they are not paying attention to what you are saying (but no one should be subjected to the clothes police. It is never ok to shame others or to be shamed!!)

What if you have limited funds and can’t buy a whole new wardrobe?

Thrift stores and clothes closets are your friend

We used to have a clothes closet on campus (hopefully it still exists)

What if you have limited funds and can’t buy a whole new wardrobe

● Make sure you are presentable but always try and
● Pay attention to the weather and time of year as well as environment and pack accordingly (if conference is not local)
● Make sure to attend to your hygiene!
Virtual Conferences

- More popular since covid
- Variety of platforms
  - Zoom/teams
  - Gathertown

- TURN YOUR CAMERA ON!!!
- Dedicate time to the virtual conference and try very hard not to multitask
- Comment in the chat
  - "Raise your hand"
- Turn your mic on
- Ask questions
- Be present and engaged

- Introduce yourself when you unmute yourself to talk
  - Name, institution, student or position, major

- It takes a lot more effort to be engaged in a virtual conference than in-person

- Introduce yourself multiple times
QR Codes vs. Business Cards

- Both are good
- QR codes are starting to be more popular because you don't have to carry things around.

If you are at big conferences you get handed a business card and when you get back to your rooms or homes, it’s hard to remember everyone. From just the business card and why you took their card (very short as business cards are small)

- If you take business cards, write yourself a note as to who that person was
- If you don’t have a website, or a LinkedIn profile, make a google slide of your contact information and your relevant information
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QR Codes vs. Business Cards

Lots of free sites will generate QR codes, you can take a picture and pull it up on your phone.
Follow thru with the opportunities!!

When the conference is over, more work to do...

- Let all the information settle
- Make some notes to yourself about what you enjoyed, what opportunities you learned about, institutional representatives you met.
- Organize your thoughts and information you have learned about, people you have met, institutional representatives you have met.
- Dedicate time to follow up with people that you met, especially those that told you “reach out to me”.
- When you do reach out to them, remind them of who you are and where you met.
- When you do reach out to them, remind them of who you are and where you met.

Thank you for taking time to talk with me. I wanted to follow up about that thing we talked about. Can we set up a time to chat or can you forward me the website about that opportunity.

A lot of us meet students and others at conferences and if you don’t remind us who you are, we likely won’t put in the effort to jog our memories as we have a lot going on.

When you do reach out to them, remind them of who you are and where you met.

It doesn’t have to be formal (but remember to be professional), it could be a 2 sentence email:

Thank you for taking time to talk with me. I wanted to follow up about that thing we talked about. Can we set up a time to chat or can you forward me the website about that opportunity.

When the conference is over, more work to do...
Thank you!
Questions?

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