Biology Department Poster Presentation Guidelines

As part of your senior thesis, you will present a poster on your research project during the Biology Department Poster Session in the TBL lobby on Friday, May 8, from 1:00-2:30 pm. Your attendance at the poster session is required for the entire session.

The purpose of a scientific poster

The purpose of a scientific poster is to visually communicate your research to others. At scientific meetings, authors typically display their posters at an interactive poster session during which they are present to guide audience members through their poster and answer questions. However, authors typically display their posters long after a poster session has ended. Therefore, a well-designed poster complements an author's presentation during a poster session, yet also contains enough information such that a reader can understand every aspect of the project in the absence of the author.

Important dates and deadlines

April: Prepare the individual sections of your poster with guidance from your advisor. You can produce your poster with whatever software you choose (popular applications include Microsoft PowerPoint, Adobe Illustrator, and Adobe InDesign).

Early May: Email ITS@williams.ed and attach your poster in PDF format, by Wednesday May 6th at noon. They will print and roll the posters and you will be able to pick them up at CET the next day.

Thurs, May 7: Your poster must be mounted in its designated location in the TBL lobby by 8:00 am.

Fri, May 8:   Formal poster session in TBL lobby, 1:00-2:30 pm. You will be assigned a 45-minute time window to stand by your poster, explain your research, and answer questions. During the remaining time, you may visit other posters or continue to present your own poster.

Important guidelines

- Your poster should be 48" wide by 36" high. Larger posters may be accommodated, but your poster may need to be displayed outside of the main poster session. Please let Debra Rogers-Gillig know if you plan to make a large poster so that appropriate arrangements can be made.
- Your poster should contain elements of an Introduction, Goal/Hypothesis, Results, Summary, Conclusion, and Acknowledgements, even if these sections aren't necessarily labeled as such.
- Again, you are required to attend the entire duration of the poster session to talk with interested students, staff, and faculty.

General tips for preparing the poster

The Department is reluctant to provide detailed instructions for preparing posters because we do not want to suppress creativity. Nevertheless, some guidelines and advice may help you prepare a higher-quality poster. Here are some fundamental points to consider:

- The poster should be a **succinct**, **clear**, and **self-explanatory** presentation of your research.
- Your poster should allow you to present your findings in a **concise**, **visual** form.
- Craft your figures to communicate your central results and ideas.
- The poster should present a narrative that is capable of being understood in the absence of the author.
- Walk through the halls of the science center to find examples of different poster styles and formats. Also check out the example of a terrible poster in the TBL lobby.
- Use the checklist on the back of this page to ensure you have carefully considered these important aspects of designing your poster.

Checklist for Designing and Preparing a Scientific Poster

Planning your poster

- ☐ Determine the message that you want to communicate with your audience.
- ☐ Determine a rough outline of the text and figures on your poster. It may be helpful to sketch the layout of your poster on a blackboard or whiteboard to visualize how your information will come across. Make sure to keep the proportions and dimensions of your poster in mind.
- ☐ Choose a color scheme ahead of time so that your figures, text, and background colors are consistent with each other.
- ☐ Determine the poster design software that is best for you (e.g. Microsoft PowerPoint, Adobe Illustrator, Adobe InDesign).

Preparing the figures

- ☐ Prepare your figures in a graphing or statistical software application.
- ☐ Design figures that can be read from a distance (at least 2 feet away).
- ☐ Save your figures/photos in CMYK color mode, as this mode ensures consistency across different printers.

Preparing the text

- ☐ Write the text of your poster in Word or a similar word processing application *before* copying to poster design software.
- ☐ Write a **title** that succinctly describes the subject and conclusion of the poster.
- ☐ Write a **background/introduction** that provides just enough information for another scientist to understand your poster. Whenever possible, use diagrams to communicate information visually.
- ☐ Write a clear scientific **hypothesis/goal** at the end of the background/introduction or in its own section.
- ☐ Only write a **methods** section if necessary. Methods can often be included in the results sections, but sometimes it is desirable to describe unique methods or approaches that readers may be unfamiliar with.
- ☐ Write several **results** sections that each provide the data for unique experiments. Ideally, each results section will be composed of a title (stating the conclusion of the experiment), a figure (showing the data), and a brief figure legend (reporting details of the data, if necessary).

- ☐ Write a **summary** that highlights 2-4 salient findings and perhaps include a brief, 1-2 sentence conclusion.
- ☐ Reduce text as much as possible to make your poster more approachable and clear.

Preparing the layout

- ☐ Ensure that your poster is the correct size (48 inches wide x 36 inches tall). If choosing a different size, be sure to let Debra Rogers-Gillig know as soon as possible
- ☐ Choose a foreground color, background color, font, and font sizes that enhance clarity and visibility. At least 16 pt. type for most fonts is recommended for the smallest text sections.
- ☐ Copy and paste your text and figures onto the poster, optimizing the layout of each.
- ☐ Make sure that the title is written in a large font size so that it is clearly visible to anyone passing by. Add authors and affiliations directly beneath the title in a smaller font size.
- ☐ Ensure that the individual sections of your poster have an intuitive layout so readers know the correct order of information.
- ☐ Ensure that your text, figures, and individual sections are surrounded by empty space so your poster doesn't seem too crowded.
- ☐ Ensure that all visual elements are properly aligned so that your poster appears symmetrical and harmonious.
- ☐ Ensure that all extraneous items (elements that don't add value to a poster) are eliminated.
- ☐ Ensure that your poster is completely free of errors, typos, and grammatical mistakes.

Printing your poster

- ☐ Print a color draft of your poster on 8 ½ x 11 inch paper to ensure that colors appear as you intend.
- ☐ Sign up for a time to print your poster well ahead of the poster session. Before the printing, examine a proof of your poster on 11 x 17 paper to ensure everything appears correct.

Presenting your poster

- ☐ Hang your poster by 8am on Thursday, May 7th, and ensure that it is straight, centered in the assigned space, and at an appropriate height.
- ☐ Prepare and rehearse a short, 3-5 minute oral presentation for people visiting your poster.
- ☐ Just before the poster session, ensure you are neat and groomed!