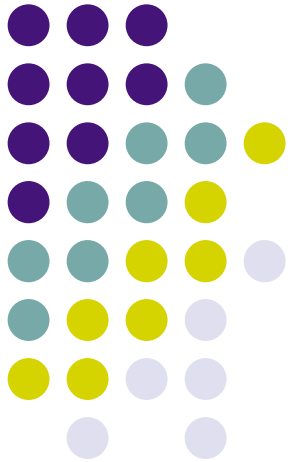
Effective Posters, Presentations, and Abstracts

Dr. Tom Gilmore
UROP Director
July 25, 2011



BOSTON UNIVERSITY

UROP

Posters vs. Oral Presentations

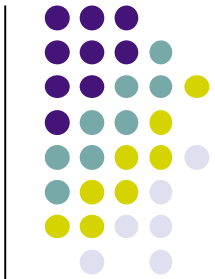
Posters

- Roaming audience
- Interactive discussion: small groups or often 1-on-1
- More informal, not structured
- Flexible content, depending on listener
- ~5-10 minutes

Oral Presentations

- Seated audience focused on speaker
- Q&A session at end
- Content is targeted toward the specific audience
- Formal and structured
- Set amount of time to present (~12 minutes)

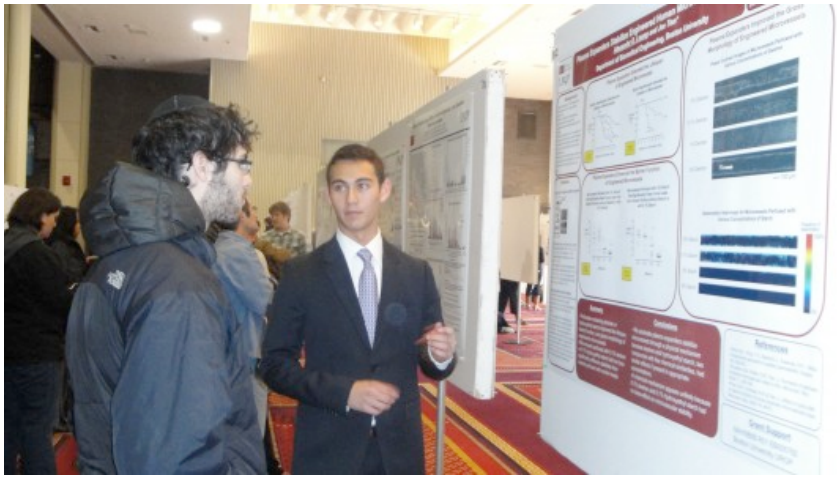
Poster Presentation Tips



- Be prepared—know more than is displayed on your poster
- Don’t assume prior knowledge of project
- Try to figure out the level of understanding of the listener
- Content should be easy to see
- Explain graphs and figures
- Engage your audience

Structure of a Poster or Presentation

- **Title and names**
  - What is your research about and who is involved?
- **Introduction and Objective**
  - Why did you do this research?
- **Methodology**
  - How did you do the research? What steps did you follow?
- **Results**
  - What new information did you learn? Use figures to illustrate.



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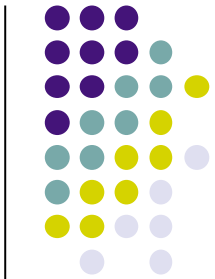
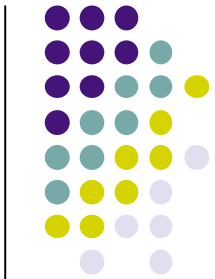


- **Summary and Conclusions**
  - Why are your results important and how do they contribute to the bigger picture?
  - What are the key things that were learned. Use bullet points
- **Future Directions**
  - What studies should follow from your work?
- **Acknowledge** sources of financial and technical support

Font Choice

- Big enough to see from 4-6 feet away!
- Highlights with Capitals, bold, color or *italics*
- But: Don't **use** *too* many fonts on *same* page
- Use bullets instead of numbers
- ALL CAPITALS ARE HARD TO READ AND GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF YELLING.

Common Poster Mistakes



- Font size is too small to be useful
- *Overuse* of color or too many *design* features
- Too much text
- Poster elements exceed space
- Graphs or data charts are not labeled
- Elements of the poster appear randomly
- Assumes too much knowledge of audience

Common Talk Slide Mistakes

- Font size is too small on slides
- *Overuse* of color or too many *design* features
- **Poor choice of background and text**
- Too much text on slide
- Presentation is too long
- Slides have more information than necessary
- Images are not labeled
- Titles of slides do not give a take-home-message
- Overuse of animation

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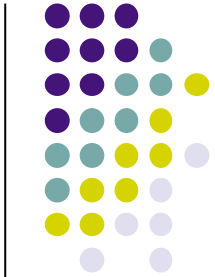
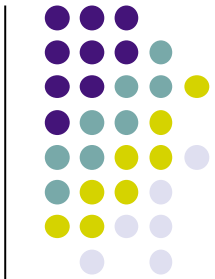
Pointers for an Effective Oral Presentation



- Be nervous! Memorize your first couple sentences
- Make sure you start slowly and simply
- Probably do not have an outline
- Don't be afraid to tell a conclusion up front
- Don't read directly from the slide or notes
- Use the pointer properly, point to what the viewer should see
- Be interesting!!!
- Don't relax when you are done – there are likely to be questions!
- Let the person ask their question fully, repeat if necessary

Abstract Writing

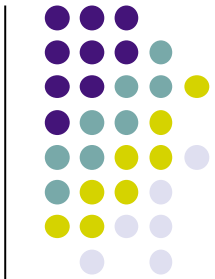


- A short description of what you did and learned
- Will help attract your audience
- Should be interesting and informative
- Keep to the requested format (for UROP, 300-400 words)
- Write for a broad audience: explain key concepts briefly and spell out abbreviations on first use
- Don’t assume reader knows why your work is important
- Don’t get caught up in numbers - include only those that are most important

Abstract Layout

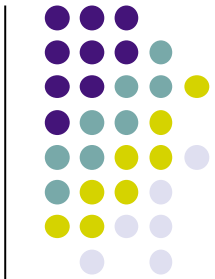
- Introduction
  - 1 sentence placing the study in context
  - 1-2 sentences explicitly stating what the study investigated and why it was special
- Body
  - 1-3 sentences summing up the approach, or the most important methods used to investigate the problem
- Results and Discussion
  - 1-3 sentences that summarize the MAJOR results and potential future applications
- Summary
  - 1 sentence that summarizes why your results are significant and perhaps what you will do in the future

Common Abstract Formatting Mistakes



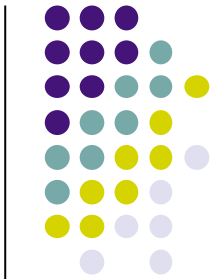
- References to other literature
- References to figures or images
- Overuse of abbreviations or acronyms
- Being repetitive
- Including unnecessary or vague sentences
- Going over (or way under) the word limit
- Not following the abstract guidelines (font, length, title, authors)

Abstract Submission



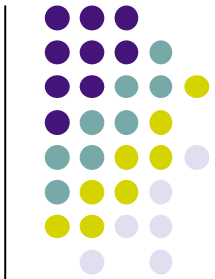
- Abstracts are due **Thursday, August 18th**
- Follow the abstract format **EXACTLY** for inclusion in the symposium booklet
  - Formatting instructions and template will be sent via email and will be available at www.bu.edu/urop
  - Abstracts will be submitted via email
- Abstracts absolutely **must not** exceed **one page** (~300-400 words)

14th Annual UROP Symposium



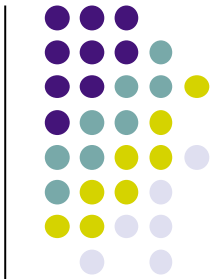
- Tentative: Friday, October 21, 2011
  - Parent's Weekend
  - GSU Small Metcalf Ballroom and GSU Conference Auditorium (2nd floor of GSU)
  - 11 am - 2:30 pm
- Poster Presentations (two 1-hour sessions)
- Prizes for top 4 posters

BI495: 2-credit course



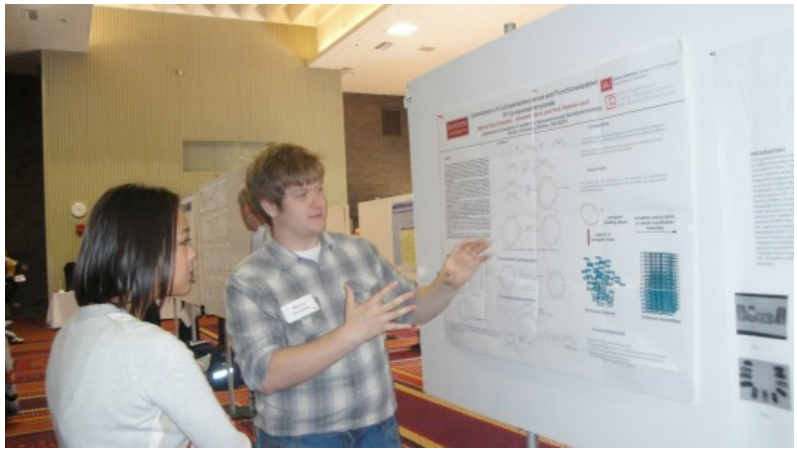
- *BU students* can still sign up for BI495 for this fall
  - Course Requirements
    - Attendance at UROP summer workshops
    - Participation in UROP Symposium
    - A 10-20 page research paper due ~October 15, 2011
  - The course is “taught” by Dr. Gilmore
  - To sign up, send an email with your name and BU ID # to urop@bu.edu
  - You will be registered for the class in early September
  - You will receive a grade for the course at the end of the fall semester. The grade will mainly be based on your report, but may be affected by attendance at Monday workshops and symposium.

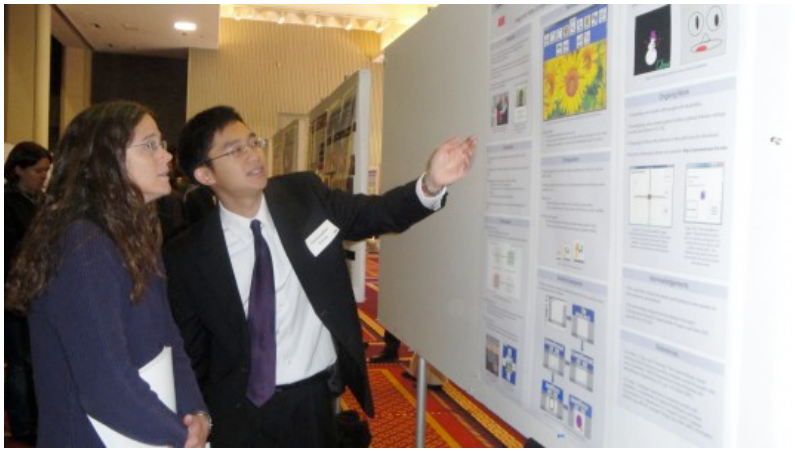
Student Evaluations

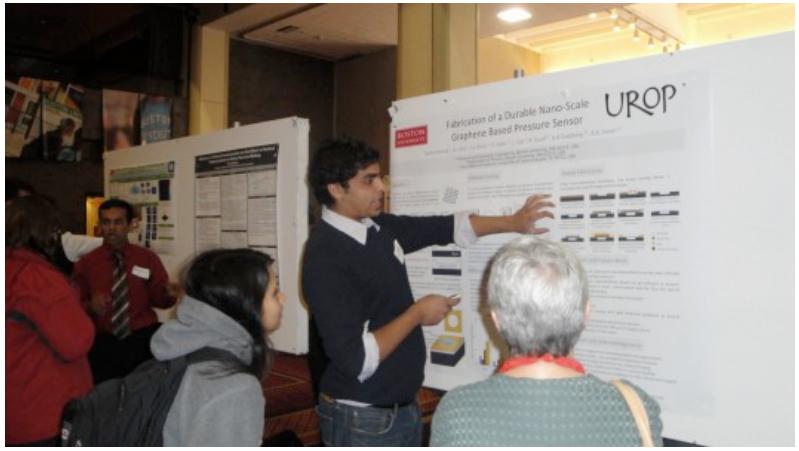


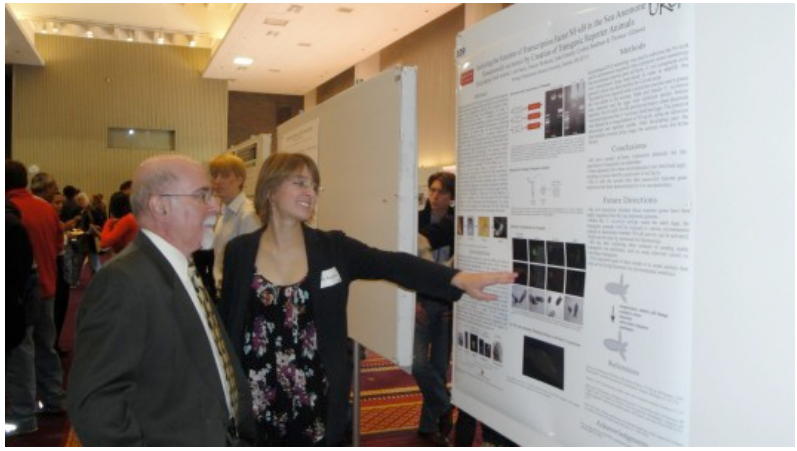
- Be sure to complete an evaluation of your summer UROP experience
- An email with a link to the evaluation will be sent to you later this summer
- Please complete evaluations by the end of August

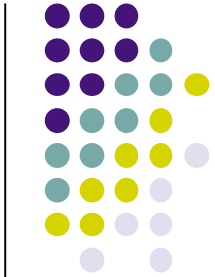
13th Annual UROP Symposium

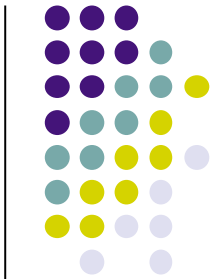






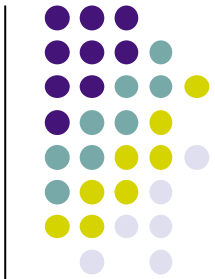






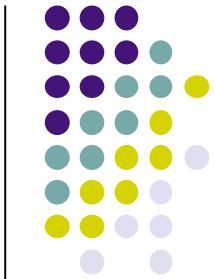
Thank you all for a great summer!

Key Elements of a Great Poster Presentation



- You have done the research and become an expert… don't be afraid to show it – be confident!
- Tell your research story with visual prompts to your poster
- Make sure content is easy to see
- Engage visitors- ask the person if they want you to explain your poster

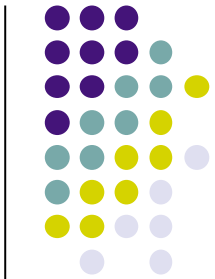
Review your Abstract



- Check your content. Did you state
  - WHY you conducted the work?
  - HOW you did your research?
  - WHAT the major results were?
  - WHAT you concluded?
  - WHY your results/studies were significant?

- Check the structure. Did you
  - Set the problem in context?
  - State the aim/goal?
  - Include a quick sentence about your method/approach?
  - State your major results?
  - Discuss the significance/implications of your conclusion?

Common Abstract Content Mistakes



- Too much detail on:
  - Background
  - Methods

  Note: You MUST describe methods and set your study in the larger context of your field, but do so in 1-2 sentences

- Too little information on:
  - Purpose/rationale of the study
  - Results
  - Conclusions
  - Implications/significance of major results