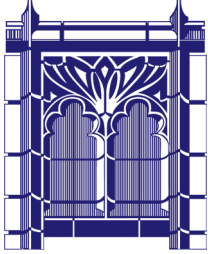


# Presenting Your Research at Academic Conferences



## THE GRADUATE SCHOOL **mentor memo** AUTUMN QUARTER 2009

This Mentor Memo, part of a series, responds to graduate students' requests for advice about navigating graduate studies successfully.

The series also addresses topics in career preparation and professional development. For more information and to suggest topics, contact Graduate School Dean Jerry Baldasty at [baldasty@u.washington.edu](mailto:baldasty@u.washington.edu).

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### **Academic conferences allow you to:**

**Start** developing your research agenda.

**Get** useful feedback on your research as you convert conference papers into journal articles.

**Gain** visibility with future colleagues, employers, and future collaborators.

**Start** networking and meet people (other graduate students, future colleagues and mentors, researchers you admire).

**Interview** for jobs.

### **Which conferences?**

Most UW departments are well-represented at key national academic conferences.

Many professional associations have divisions that may reflect your department's areas of expertise. Graduate students also find it useful to present their research at topic-specific conferences. Check with faculty to see which organizations hold conferences where it would be appropriate for your research to be presented.

### **When and how?**

Deadlines for conferences are usually noted on academic organizations' websites. When considering how to submit your research, be sure to check submission requirements. Some conferences require full papers, while others will consider only abstracts. Be sure to adhere to these details and all deadlines, and be sure to submit your work to a relevant division! (What constitutes "relevant?" Check abstracts and programs from previous years' conferences.)

### **At the conference...**

Some departments provide funds that allow you to travel to conferences to present your research. In addition to talking about your research in a variety of ways, take advantage of being at the conference to learn about the field, meet other people, and participate.

### **Presenting your research**

You will be judged first and foremost on your research, which means that you should strive for a great presentation. In other words:

**there's more... >**

Know what attendees at this particular conference expect, e.g., reading your paper vs. summarizing your paper? PowerPoint slides?

Know your research and what it contributes to the larger body of research.

Never, ever, exceed the allotted time! Think of your presentation as a headline service. You cannot cover all points, so select the ones you believe are most important.

### **A few tips to help you navigate the conference:**

**Read** the conference program; attend the sessions that interest you, but don't plan every hour.

**Be ready** with a brief "elevator talk" about your research. Conferences are very busy times, and people will not have time to hear a full explication of all your research projects.

**Identify** the individuals you would like to meet and ask your mentor/adviser to introduce you.

**Introduce yourself** to people. Many graduate students feel as if they know no one, so you're not alone. If you are interested in meeting faculty and "big names," walk up to them when they appear to have a spare moment, and talk about how you are using their research in your own work. Chances are they will want to learn more about you and your work.

**Attend** graduate forums and receptions.

**Socialize** at receptions held by various departments and schools.

Regardless of the sessions you attend and the people you meet, always **remain professional**. You want to be remembered for your research and professional demeanor, not anything else!