

## **STUDENT PAPER PRESENTATION AWARD GUIDELINES**

### **I. ELIGIBILITY**

A. The student should submit a copy of the paper's abstract\* to the meeting organizer by the specified deadline (see AAS website for meeting information). A letter containing a statement from the student's major professor or supervisor indicating the extent to which the work was independently developed and executed by the student also must be sent to the meeting host.

The name and mailing address of the Meeting Host can be found at the AAS website.

The abstract may be submitted via the A.A.S. Website  
The letter should be sent either electronically or by post to the host

B. The presentation either represents independent or joint research in which the student's contribution has been substantial. In case of a co-authored paper the student presenting the paper must be first author.

C. Entry is limited to one standard research paper per meeting.

D. Previous winners of the Student Paper award are not eligible. Runner-ups are eligible.

### **II. JUDGES**

A. A panel of three judges will be appointed by the President-Elect before the meeting. The abstracts of all student papers and a copy of the judging guidelines will be mailed to each judge prior to the meeting. An appropriate number of evaluation sheets (listing the criteria as below) shall accompany the abstract package for each judge. Judges will be chosen from different disciplines (systematics, morphology, physiology, ecology, behavior).

B. Efforts should be made to avoid bias or conflict of interest in judging, either by appointing judges with no students in the competition or, if that is unavoidable, by having judges abstain from voting on their own students.

C. Judges should meet twice: once before the paper presentation to review the guidelines and once afterward to make a decision on ranking.

D. At least one hour should be available between the last eligible presentation and the scheduled announcement of the award.

### **III. EVALUATION**

A. Judges should rate presentations as "Outstanding, Good, Adequate, or Poor"

based on the criteria listed below. In co-authored papers, the judges will carefully evaluate the student's contribution to the presented research. In case of a tie or very close ranking, the judges may decide on a joint award.

## B. Scientific Criteria

### 1. Introduction:

- a. Was there a clear introduction to the research problem?
- b. Was the importance of the research question explained? Why was the work done?
- c. Did the speaker provide a background and context for the research? What was the state of the field prior to this study? A review of the entire field is not necessary, but the speaker must provide a reference framework in which to assess the work.
- d. Was a clear statement of the hypothesis(es) provided?

### 2. Methods:

- a. Was there a clear explanation of the techniques used in the project?
- b. How creative was the work? If the presentation involved techniques commonly used by the advisor, did the student utilize the technique to approach novel issues or novel questions?

### 3. Results:

- a. Were the results of the study a valuable contribution to the field? Was the significance of the results clearly demonstrated? Could the student convince the audience they should care about their results?!
- c. Were the experiments or results approached from several perspectives?

### 4. Discussion & Conclusions:

- a. Were the results well summarized and placed in context relative to the introduction?
- b. How sound were the conclusions?
- c. Did the student extend the work beyond other projects associated with their advisor, or was it simply a minor increment of similar work?
- d. Was the research sufficiently independent, unique, or creative?
- e. Were the conclusions put in a broader context extending the value of the work beyond a small area in arachnology to better understanding within the field of systematics/ behavior/ ecology/ etc?

## C. Presentation Style and Logistics (oral):

1. Did the speaker speak clearly and logically or was the organization of the talk confused and disorganized? Did the speaker communicate clearly and easily? Was eye contact made

with the audience, or was the paper simply read from notes or the screen?

2. Were the graphics lucid? Were all of the figures intelligible with axes clearly labeled? Were tables broken into decipherable segments? Did the student clearly put effort into making the graphics used for the talk self-explanatory or informative?

3. Were the techniques used explained with a minimal use of specialist jargon so that a nonspecialist or non-scientist could understand how the project was done?

4. Did the student project a professional demeanor, or were unnecessary 'humor', inappropriate references, or excessive excuses made?

5. How poised was the speaker? Was the presentation "timed" correctly?

6. How well did the speaker respond to questions?

D. Presentation Style and logistics (poster):

1. Was the poster clearly organized and well planned or was it clearly done at the last minute?

2. Were the graphics lucid? Were all of the figures intelligible with axes clearly labeled? Were tables broken into decipherable segments? Were the text, tables, and graphics self-explanatory or informative?

3. Were the techniques used clearly explained with a minimal use of specialist jargon, such that a non-specialist or non-scientist could understand how the project was done?

4. Was the poster clearly arranged such that there was minimal text for maximal effect? Were the visuals used appropriate for the point being made?

5. How well did the presenter respond to questions?

#### **IV. ADDITIONAL PROCEDURES**

Traditionally, the award is announced at the society's banquet. Students are strongly encouraged to attend the banquet since this is an ideal setting to "schmooze" with established arachnologists and to see George Uetz, auctioneer extraordinaire, and his minions, at their best.

#### **V. AWARDS**

The top ranking and runner-up individuals traditionally receive a monetary award. Other awards vary according to donations and other philanthropy.

#### **SAMPLE JUDGING SHEET**

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Co-authors: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Paper: \_\_\_\_\_

OVERALL RATING - \_\_\_\_\_

Scientific criteria:

- Clarity of Introduction; background & context.
- Abstract; summarize main results of research?
- Scope of research problem; hypothesis(es) stated?
- Approach, design, and creativity of study
- Quality and details of analysis; clearly explained?
- Significance of results; different perspectives used?
- Soundness of conclusions; relation to Introduction?
- Contribution to field; impact outside immediate field?

Rating of Scientific Criteria - \_\_\_\_\_

Presentation (oral):

- Overall organization and clarity; proper timing?
- Oral presentation skill; presence, poise, & demeanor.
- Graphics were high quality and easy to read and interpret.
- Ability to respond to questions.

Rating of Oral Presentation Criteria - \_\_\_\_\_

Presentation (poster):

- Overall organization and clarity-Minimal text for maximal effect?
- Graphics were high quality and easy to read and interpret.
- Ability to respond to questions.

Rating of Poster Presentation Criteria - \_\_\_\_\_

## **HINTS ON GIVING A GREAT RESEARCH PRESENTATION**

**Thanks to Linda Rayor!**

### **Scientific Criteria:**

- Give a clear introduction to your research problem. Provide a background to your research and inform the audience about the state of the field prior to this study. You need not provide a review of the entire field, but your listeners deserve to have your contribution to the field put into context. Explain the *importance* of your research question and why the work is of value.

-Clearly state the hypothesis(es) tested.

-Clearly explain the techniques or experiments used in the project.

Explicitly describe any novel or uncommon apparatus or protocol.

-Explain your results clearly. The audience only has a minute or two to digest the content of your figures, so make the figures easy to read and to understand (uncluttered). It is often much better to present smaller portions of your data rather than large, unintelligible tables or figures (“less is best”). Provide telegraphic titles that help the audience grasp the meaning of the results more easily. Try to minimize abbreviations and jargon that only you understand. Basically, make it *easy* for your audience to understand your data as you guide them through it.

-Explain why the results of your study are a valuable contribution to your field. In your talk or poster, you should put the research in context so that the audience *cares* about your results. Do your conclusions extend beyond a small question in arachnology? Does your work contribute to better understanding within the broader field of systematics/ behavior/ ecology, etc.?

### **Presentation Style & Logistics:**

-It is much easier to understand a talk or poster that is logically organized rather than one that is confused and disorganized.

-As indicated above, your graphics should be lucid and easy to follow. Are your figures intelligible with the axes clearly labeled? Without you talking or you being present, would it be possible to look at the graphics and interpret the figures? Are the tables broken into intelligible segments? Are your graphics self-explanatory and informative?

-Few biologists are specialists in everything. For those biologists who work outside of your area of specialty, it is helpful if you explain your project with minimal use of specialist jargon or explain the unusual terms in your presentation. Your project should be understood by anyone in the audience, regardless of his or her field of expertise.

-You should project a professional demeanor. While humor may lighten a talk or a poster, humor that misses the mark can be jarring. Groveling excuses about problems with your data or your slides or visuals, inappropriate jabs at members of the audience, or private jokes generally do not go over well in a professional setting.