

## Creating Effective PowerPoint Presentations

### **Presenting the Information:**

• Choose a consistent slide layout and design for the slide's particular purpose. For instance, the following categories would be common:

- \* Slides with key bulleted information in keyword format
- \* Slides with images which underscore or illustrate specific points
- \* Slides with key questions
- \* Slides with quotes from other sources which drive home important ideas or information
- \* Slides with data (statistics, lists of events or examples, test results, etc.)

• Minimize text to key words and phrases. Use your voice to add the words that are not on the slide itself. Have more detailed notes on separate paper if needed for your own use.

• Make sure syntax is parallel between bulleted points.

• Use images whenever possible; use the power of metaphor and symbol in images to emphasize key concepts and points.

• Use graphs and diagrams whenever possible to illustrate points.

• Repeat images/phrases throughout the talk to spiral back into and integrate old material with new material without having to verbally or textually reiterate it.

• Avoid information overload from presenting too many slides too fast. The rule of thumb is one slide per 1-2 minutes.

• Provide a concise overview and summary slide.

### **About the Appearance:**

• Keep your background simple and uncluttered so that focus is on the content, not on the design. Typically a black or white background is the most effective and easiest to read.

• Keep slides simple in layout and design—do not put too much information on one slide. If you need to visually illustrate a lot of information, present it over several different slides.

• Only use color for specific purposes (indicating the title, highlighting important points, etc.) rather than to "jazz up" the presentation. (Note: Stick to primary colors; light colors such as yellow are hard to read. Avoid a lot of red as many people, particularly males, are red/green colorblind.)

• Choose a simple font (sans serif fonts [no finishing lines on the letters], such as Helvetica and

Arial, are easiest to read) which is 18point or larger. Use bold face, italics, etc. for emphasis.

• Proofread each slide carefully. After all, it will be up for everyone to critique for a long time.

• Keep the slide transitions simple and consistent; do not "layer" slides unless it aids comprehension of the material.

• Do not pre-time slide transitions—everyone speaks slower when live.

• Most of all, be consistent and pay attention to the details—your audience will! For example, make sure all of the titles (and subtitles) are the same size/color and in the same general location.

## Students Tell What Constitutes a Good Lecture

Every lecturer worries about his or her style. Should one strive for a casual, off-the-cuff delivery, or a highly orchestrated barrage of handouts and transparencies? A student focus group noted that they find a variety of styles effective; some professors achieved success with animated performances and jokes while others impressed them with posted outlines, targeted questions, and well-paced thoroughness. The style, they said, was not as important as the professor's ability to "break the trance" with demonstrations, examples, and changes in tone. Students also appreciated lecturers who incorporated responses from students, either by soliciting questions at certain stages, making themselves available afterwards, or using the Web to garner feedback outside of class. The focus group appreciated professors' attempts to connect with them and noted that such interactive advances were well worth the initial awkwardness they felt when jolted out of their passive "audience" role. Professors who expected responses and incorporated student feedback into successive lectures not only promoted better preparation, they also earned the most respect and enthusiasm.

When asked to define the most important aspect of a lecturer's "performance," the entire group of students said organization and outlines were essential. They agreed that animation and enthusiasm helped to engage their attention, but they stressed that lecturers who posted outlines and paced their delivery to fit the speed of the note-taking audience conveyed information most effectively. Lecturers who sped through dense material, on the other hand, created tension and anxiety. Students find that certain techniques aid them in retaining the material and taking useful, thorough notes: outlines, lists, pauses for clarification, repetition of key points, and a

## Teaching Tips

final recap of the main points of the lecture. Some said it helped if the professor incorporated material from the reading, others claimed a brief review of the previous lecture or strategically-placed references to overarching themes or course units sufficed for assimilation of new material. Students also praised the use of short intermissions to review material in groups, write down questions, connect current events to the material, or note personal reactions. They welcomed any active measures that broke up a 50- or 75-minute lecture, especially those that permitted greater reflection and retention during the class period. Students were not, however, enthusiastic about professors who pursued tangents, arguments, and anecdotes at the expense of central points.

Students also understood the value of a lecture's "performance" aspects and its physicality as well. Lectures provide a regularized encounter with the material. Attending lecture prompted them to think about the subject in a focused way, and writing notes helped them to process the material. The panel agreed that there was a correlation between the number of lectures they attended and their final grade; just by showing up they could learn. They also noted that a professor's ability to communicate large amounts of information in a concentrated form made the subject matter more comprehensible, especially for novices. The professor provided an active example of learning and processing information that, in turn, helped students digest the material on their own. Students especially appreciated professors who displayed organization, included interactive techniques, and conveyed excitement about their subject. Lectures that combined those qualities prompted them to learn more even if they were not initially interested. Although students reported such conviviality was easier to attain in small lectures, they agreed that large lectures could be effective if the professor encouraged interaction and volunteered his/her own reactions and opinions. In short, the panel said that professors need to take advantage of their "captive audience" in as many ways as possible by soliciting responses and reactions from the students, by providing aids for note-taking and comprehension, and by daring to model learning in action, not learning as passive acquisition.

## Writing Student Learning Outcomes

**Step 1:** State the course goals in broad, narrative statements.

**Step 2:** To link course goals to specific student learning outcomes, ask the following questions:

- What are the specific student behaviors, skills, or abilities would indicate this course goal is being achieved?
- What evidence tells you when students have met these goals – how do you know when they have "gotten" it?
- What would an outside audience (i.e. employer, certifying agency) need to see occur to know that your

students are achieving the major goals you have set out for them - (what evidence needs to be present, what specific behavior needs to be visible)?

**Step 3:** Write out specific student learning outcomes using action verbs. State outcomes in terms of behavior or skills that are demonstrable/measurable. Stated outcomes should include the following characteristics:

- Use action words that specify definite, observable behaviors
- Use simple language
- Indicate an appropriate level of attainment
- Use vocabulary that completely defines the desired outcome
- Identify outcomes that are realistic and achievable
- Indicate outcomes that are assessable through one or more indicators

## Assessment Methods

The following assessment methods could be used to measure the extent to which a program is accomplishing its learning outcomes:

- Portfolio: Samples of student work in written format, videotaped microteaching demonstration, and computer-generated materials
- Leadership record: Students will regularly submit point sheets reflecting leadership activities conducted each term. These leadership records become part of the student's permanent file.
- Internship: Students will apply concepts learned and report on internship
- Microteaching demonstrations: Students in their senior year conduct videotaped microteaching demonstrations
- Examination scores: Students tested on specific concepts that reflect learning outcomes.
- Entrance and exit interviews: Students interviewed by a faculty member on an informal basis to determine student response to the program requirement, effectiveness of the faculty and level of student's knowledge and skills.
- Report on student research project