



Science: Becoming the Messenger

A communications skills-building workshop brought to you by the National Science Foundation

For a small group of ambitious researchers specially selected to participate for a second day

University of Missouri Memorial Student Union
August 12, 2013

DAY TWO - DRAFT

Day Two of the “Science: Becoming the Messenger” workshop focuses on applying the skills and knowledge gained on Day One—skills and knowledge that are reinforced through the required homework assignment each participant completes on the eve of Day Two. The core purpose of Day Two is to give a select group of Day One attendees an additional, personalized, experiential learning opportunity in a more intimate setting. In-depth, one-on-one mentoring sessions, working sessions, and exercises developed specifically for this workshop help participants internalize effective communications discipline.

During the day, each participant sits for a short (3- to 4-minute) on-camera “journalist” interview (conducted by NSF/EPSCoR staff) and delivers a 3-minute PowerPoint presentation of his/her message to workshop attendees and the workshop leaders. Each presentation is followed by a mock press conference, in which participants take questions from the floor. These activities enable attendees to exhibit and practice their developing communications skills, and each is accompanied by constructive feedback and commentary by their workshop colleagues and/or the facilitators.

7:30—8:00

Breakfast

8:00—8:20

Introductions

An ice-breaking exercise in which participants are given 60 seconds to state their names, institutions, and fields of study, and to succinctly convey what they most want to achieve during the day.

8:20—10:15

**Media Interview Tips and Techniques/
and Journalist Exercise**

A handy checklist of do’s and don’ts for communicating successfully with journalists, including recommendations on how to work with the media, prepare for interviews, dress and act on camera, and what not to say. The importance of these techniques is reinforced by reviewing a scientist’s performance during an actual news broadcast. The session ends with part I of an exercise on how to handle a journalist’s request for a telephone interview.

10:15 - 11:30

Working Session and On-Camera Media Interviews

The first of two working sessions in which attendees are required to meet individually with one of the three workshop leaders. During this first session, participants receive one-on-one coaching regarding the communications plans and messages they prepared for the homework assignment. Also during this time, each participant conducts a mock, on-camera media interview that is recorded for individual analysis with Joe Schreiber later in the day. Participants can download the video interview to their laptops for additional review after the workshop.

11:30—12:00 Presentation Tips and Techniques

The lecture portion of Day Two concludes with recommendations on how to make messages persuasive, insights on non-verbal communications, and tips for handling Q&A sessions.

12:00—1:30 Working Session (includes lunch)

During this second working session, participants again meet individually with one of the three facilitators, this time specifically to go over the PowerPoint presentations they have developed and intend to deliver later in the afternoon.

1:30—1:45 Setting the Stage for the Presentations and Mock Press Conference

Last minute instructions for the 3-minute PowerPoint presentations, and the mock press conferences that follow.

1:45—3:00 Presentations and Mock Press Conferences

Following a randomly assigned order, participants proceed to the stage and deliver their PowerPoint presentations (addressed to the audience at a fictional “U.S. Science Festival”). In addition to limiting their presentations to 3 minutes, presenters also must use a handheld microphone, a remote control for advancing their slides, and a special display mode within PowerPoint. Any presenter who exceeds the 3-minute time limit is summarily cut off. The rigid time constraint, combined with the unfamiliar presentation requirements, serves to approximate the stresses presenters feel during real presentations. At the conclusion of the presentation comes a mock press conference, in which workshop attendees and facilitators play the role of journalists attending the U.S. Science Festival. Presenters field questions from the floor that are variously serious and off-the-wall, helping them hone their extemporaneous communications skills and develop poise and confidence in front of an audience.

3:00—3:15 Break

3:15—4:45 Presentations and Mock Press Conferences Continue

4:45—5:00 Wrap Up, Complete Evaluation Forms, Presentation of Certificates