ORAL PRESENTATION INSTRUCTIONS

Annual Student Research Symposium
These are suggested guidelines for preparing your oral presentation, written by Dr. Shawn Meagher. See your advisor for their opinion.

Guidelines for Oral Presentations
Talks will be allotted 20 minutes total. You should speak for approximately 17 minutes, and allow 3 minutes for questions. Prepare visual aids to accompany your talk. Use PowerPoint [CD-ROM, thumb drive, etc.]). Your final talk needs to be emailed to a-porras-alfaro@wiu.edu by 5pm on April 4th.

Tips for Successful Oral Presentations
Use your talk to emphasize (repeatedly) 2 or 3 main points. Audience members will only be paying attention to you sporadically. Use the following tips to increase your chances of getting your message across.

Time distribution: Before your slides, begin with a brief Introduction (1-2 minutes), in which you describe the general research area and your results (1st time audience will hear them). With the slides, take 7-9 minutes to explain your Methods and Results (2nd time audience hears message). End the slides with a Summary or Conclusion that you want your audience to take home (3rd time).

Slides (number): Include only as many slides as you can discuss meaningfully in your allotted time. A common rule of thumb is no more than one slide for each minute you will be talking (some slides require little description “my study site was here…” while others require a lot – description and interpretation of data/graphs).

Slides (general): Limit each slide to a single idea. Make them as simple and large as possible so that they are readable from at least 50 ft. 18-24 pt font is a good minimum size.

Slides (data): Graphs are better than tables. If you must use tables, do NOT use ones directly from manuscripts or papers; retype them, and include only critical information. Do not complicate unnecessarily. Put only 1 figure/graph per slide, and do not use 3-D unless the additional axis provides information (it rarely does!).

Slides (text): Text slides can be used to describe the research goals and Methods (but figures are often better) and to emphasize your conclusions.
• Telegraphic style is best
• Fewer than 42 characters per line
• Fewer than 14 lines per slide
**Practice:** You must practice (aloud) several times so that you stay within the time limit. You may want to write your speech out (entirely) beforehand to make sure that you can make your points clearly and that you make smooth transitions. Practice with your advisor and labmates!

**Presentation:** Speak slowly. Do not assume that audience members will figure anything out by themselves. For example, describe graph axes before you describe patterns in your data. Make eye contact with the audience and interact with your slides: point to parts you want the audience to consider (axes, trends, localities, structures, etc.) Deliver your talk with an outline based on your written text, so that you will not read (and bore the audience), but can find your place if you get lost. You may want to have your Introduction and Conclusion written in full so that you can get through it smoothly.

**Slides (color):** Black on white is most legible, particularly if there is any room light. Be sure to use colors with high contrast, and remember that some audience members may be colorblind (careful of red and green, or blue and red).

**PowerPoint:** Avoid unnecessarily complex, distracting backgrounds. Do not use complicated transitions, animations or cute sounds. Keep the audience’s attention on your content, not cute graphics. Try out your presentation before the symposium to make sure your file is compatible with our computer equipment (PC). Have backup copies in case something happens to your computer media.