

# How to Create and Present a Research Poster

A summer research experience typically involves an opportunity to share what you learned! The most common method for sharing is the creation and presentation of a poster summarizing your collaborative work. You will have the opportunity to present your poster at the Macalester poster session held each fall, and there may be additional chances to present at a professional conference and/or your host institution. Your faculty and graduate student mentors may have specific ideas for your poster layout and content. Below you will find some general directions to help you get started:

## 1) The Planning Phase

It is important that you talk with your faculty mentor about your poster several weeks in advance of the poster session. A poster typically includes the following components:

- *Title/Authors/Authors' institutions*
- *Abstract*
- *Introduction*
- *Materials and methods*
- *Data/Results*
- *Discussion*
- *Literature cited*
- *Acknowledgements*: your chance to thank your mentor and colleagues (who may or may not be listed as authors) and to cite your funding source(s). Be sure to ask if you are not sure about the source of your funding.

## 2) Macalester Poster Guidelines

- The Science Division policy is not to use a costly full-color background for in-house/on-campus posters.
- The Macalester poster template is sized to fit our easels. If you make a poster that is bigger than the template, the poster hangs off of the easel and does not look professional.
- The Macalester poster paper supply is 42" wide. Any poster that does not include 42" as either the height or width will have large white borders. This should be avoided.
- If both dimensions of your poster are greater than 42" it cannot be printed until it is scaled down.
- For printing instructions, follow the [poster printing guidelines](#).

## 3) The Event

- Usually, the event is in a large room with many, many posters and presenters. People walk around the room and may stop to ask about your project. Be ready to talk about your work and start your presentation over and over again. Most people will want the "short version" which should be a friendly overview of your work that takes 3-4 minutes to describe all of it. Let them ask questions to shape the rest of your presentation.
- Be sure you are able to talk about the "why" of your work. Why does this matter? What are you and your team hoping to accomplish or impact? Even if your data or findings are inconclusive,

you can still have a lot to say about next steps in the work. Understand how your project fits into the larger goals of the laboratory.

- You will describe your research to people with varying levels of knowledge about the subject matter. Some may be happy to hear about the general process and your findings (the 30-60 second version of your story) while others may be deep into this work themselves and have some follow-up questions for you!
- These events are great networking opportunities. When you have a break, walk around to see what others have done and ask them questions. Perhaps you will learn about something you would like to do in the future or maybe you meet your next collaborator!