Preparing our Future Leaders to be Effective Communicators

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Verbal Communication Skills are Ranked First Among a Job Candidate’s ‘Must Have’ Skills and Qualities

• Presentation Skills
• Interpersonal Communication Skills
• Non-verbal Communication
• Listening
• Asking Questions and Providing Effective Feedback

¹National Association of Colleges and Employers 2016 survey
Strategies and Approaches for Teaching Presentation Skills

- Classroom presentations and discussion
- Lab meeting presentations and discussion
- Journal club presentations and scientific critiques
- Committee meetings
- Formal Divisional/Departmental seminars
- 3 Minute Thesis preparation
- Poster presentations at local/regional and national/international meetings
- Podium presentations at local/regional and national/international meetings
Other Vital Communication Skills

- Delivering clear messages
- Communicating in stressful situations
- Difficult conversations
- Interviewing skills
Written Communication Skills

- Scientific writing
  - Detailed results
  - Concise conclusions
  - Executive summary of key points
- Scientific peer review
- Science writing & communicating with the public
- CV development
- Letters
- Email communication
Strategies and Approaches for Teaching Writing Skills

- Classroom writing assignments and exams
- Research proposals
- Progress reports
- Abstracts
- Dissertation
- Publications
- Grant Writing
Individual Development Plan (IDP)

• Detailed description of trainee’s career plans and professional goals. IDPs are used to guide professional development activities

• Step #1: Communication Skills Assessment
  — Presentation Skills
  — Scientific Writing
  — Critical Analysis of Scientific Literature
  — Committee Meetings
  — Publications

• Step #2: Create a specific plan for developing skills

• Step #3: Mentors and mentees work together to identify areas for improvement and discuss long-term goals
Strategies and Approaches for Teaching Communication Skills

• Faculty advisors and mentoring committee members
  — Research advisor(s)
  — Program and career guidance mentor
  — Professional development mentor

• Internships or other practical, hands-on training

• Teaching experience
  — Leading formal classroom discussions/problem solving
  — Facilitation of group discussions
Professional Development

• UNC Graduate School Professional Development Courses (0.5-1.5 credit hrs; http://gradprofdev.web.unc.edu/courses/)
  – GRAD 704: Effective Presentation Skills
  – GRAD 710: Professional Communication: Writing
  – GRAD 711: Professional Communication: Presenting
  – GRAD 712: Leadership for the Work Place
  – GRAD 713: Applied Project Management; Frameworks, Principles and Techniques

• Professional Development for Pharmaceutical Scientists (2 credit hrs)

• Online Resources:
  http://tibbs.unc.edu/resources/professional-development-lending-library/
Professional Development

• Online and Text Resources:
  – http://tibbs.unc.edu/resources/

• Grant and Scientific Writing
  – A Field Guide for Science Writers: The Official Guide of the National Association of Science Writers (Blum)
  – Essentials of Writing Biomedical Research Papers
  – Expectations Teaching Writing from the Reader’s Perspective (Gopen)
  – Guide to Effective Grant Writing: How to Write a Successful NIH Grant Application (Yang)
  – How to Write a Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing by Silvia
  – How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper” 6th Edition (Day & Gastel)
  – Sin & Syntax
  – Style: Toward Clarity and Grace (Williams)
  – Successful Scientific Writing (Matthews, Bowen & Matthews)
  – The Chicago Guide to Communicating Science (Montgomery)
  – The Elements of Teaching Writing (Gottschalk)
  – Writing the Doctoral Dissertation (Davis)

http://tibbs.unc.edu/resources/professional-development-lending-library/
Professional Development

• Presentation Skills
  – Communicating Science Giving Talks
  – Dazzle ‘Em With Style: The Art of Oral Scientific Presentation (Anholt)
  – Presentation Skills 201: How to take it to the Next Level as a Confident, Engaging Presenter (Steele)
  – Presenting Science to the Public
  – Speaking about Science: A Manual for Creating Clear Presentations (Morgan & Whitener)

• Conflict Resolution and Interpersonal Skills
  – Collaborative Approach to Resolving Conflict
  – Please understand me II
  – The Conflict and Communication Activity Book: 30 High-Impact Training Exercises for Adult Learners (Withers & Lewis)
  – The Eight Essential Steps to Conflict Resolution (Weeks)
  – The Feeling Good Handbook
  – The Joy of Conflict Resolution: Transforming Victims, Villains and Heroes in the Workplace and at Home (Harper)

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Summary

- Developing effective communication skills is not a “spectator sport”
- Traditionally, universities have relied on individual faculty mentors to teach these critical “soft skills”
- Recognized gaps in optimally preparing the next generation of leaders to be effective communicators has led to:
  - Increased awareness of the importance of teaching communication skills
  - Development of new strategies, training approaches and mechanisms to foster the development of such skills