Interdisciplinary Biological Sciences Symposium

Speaker Committee
Standard Operating Procedures

This is a set of Speaker Committee Guidelines that covers speaker criteria, diversity considerations, the role of the student host, and the next steps for managing the event. These guidelines will help ensure a structured and smooth process from speaker selection to the symposium itself.

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Organizing a symposium presents an excellent opportunity to network and engage with alumni, academics, and industry professionals. To identify and secure speakers who can provide valuable insights and enhance the event's success, consider the following strategies:

1. **Leverage Your Professional Network**: Begin by reaching out to co-horts, faculty members, and industry contacts. Personal recommendations often lead to speakers who are both reputable and relevant to your symposium's theme.
2. **Utilize Speaker Databases and Bureaus**: Explore online platforms and organizations that specialize in connecting event organizers with potential speakers. These resources can help you discover individuals with expertise in your area of interest.
3. **Engage with Alumni Associations**: Tap into alumni networks to identify former students who have achieved prominence in their fields. Alumni are often eager to contribute to their alma mater and share their experiences.
4. **Review Academic Publications and Conferences**: Identify scholars who have published influential work or presented at notable conferences. These individuals can offer cutting-edge research and perspectives relevant to your symposium.
5. **Attend Industry Events**: Participate in conferences and seminars within your industry to meet potential speakers. Networking at these events can lead to connections with professionals who are experienced in public speaking.
6. **Explore Social Media and Professional Platforms**: Use platforms like LinkedIn to search for experts in your field. Engaging with their content and initiating conversations can open doors to potential speaking engagements.
7. **Collaborate with Academic Departments and Research Centers**: Work with university departments and research institutes to identify faculty members and researchers whose work aligns with your symposium's topics.

By implementing these strategies, you can curate a diverse and knowledgeable panel of speakers, enriching the symposium experience for all participants.

Speaker criteria

Step 1: Identify Potential Speakers

To ensure a diverse and high-quality speaker lineup, committee members should seek recommendations from the following sources:

Faculty and Researchers

- Ask faculty members within your department and related disciplines.
- Reach out to researchers with recent publications or grant awards in relevant fields.

Graduate Students and Postdocs

- Invite suggestions from graduate students and postdocs who may know emerging voices or collaborators.
- Consider speakers who have presented at other conferences or symposia.

Industry and Professional Contacts

- Contact professionals in biotech, agriculture, environmental consulting, or health sciences.
- Use LinkedIn or professional networks to identify experts working in applied biological sciences.

Professional Societies and Conferences

- Browse speaker lists from recent conferences (e.g., ASBMB, ESA, ASM).
- Use society directories or speaker bureaus to find vetted experts.

Published Authors and Thought Leaders

- Look for authors of influential papers or books in your focus areas.
- Consider those who have contributed to interdisciplinary or public-facing science.

Step 2: Build a speaker matrix

Create a table to track potential candidates and ensure all criteria are met:

Speaker Name	Alumni?	Academic	Industry	Biological Focus	Male	Female
Candidate 1	Yes	Yes		Organismal and Systems Biology	Yes	
Candidate 2			Yes	Translational and Applied Sciences		Yes

This matrix helps ensure balanced representation as you finalize your speakers.

Criteria Breakdown

1. Try For At Least One Alumni

- Leverage alumni networks, LinkedIn, and university platforms to identify alumni excelling in biological sciences.
- Look for those with interdisciplinary work in plants or animals to fill additional categories.

2. One from Academia and One from Industry

- **Academia**: Identify professors, researchers, or postdocs actively contributing to biological sciences.
    - Sources: University directories, PubMed, or conference speaker lists.
- **Industry**: Reach out to professionals in biotech, pharmaceuticals, or environmental industries.
    - Sources: LinkedIn, industry conferences, or corporate websites.

3. Three completely different areas of the following (this can be added to or changed for better scientific overview). Consider experts in plant biology, genomics, agriculture, or ecology.

Organismal and Systems Biology

- Botanical Sciences
- Zoological and Animal Sciences
- Ecological and Environmental Biology

Molecular and Cellular Biology

- Microbial and Molecular Biology
- Evolutionary and Developmental Biology

Quantitative and Computational Biology

- Computational Biology / Bioinformatics

Translational and Applied Sciences

- Biomedical and Human Health
- Applied Biological Sciences / Industry Representative

5. Gender Representation (at least One Male and One Female)

- Maintain gender balance by shortlisting an equal number of male and female candidates.

Identify Overlapping Criteria

- Prioritize candidates who fulfill multiple categories (e.g., a female alumni specializing in plants and working in academia). This ensures you meet all criteria efficiently.

Review Public Speaking Engagements (IMPORTANT)

- Locate an online video of the intended speaker (e.g., conference talk, webinar, panel discussion, or lecture).
- Evaluate presentation quality, including clarity, engagement, and ability to communicate complex ideas to a diverse audience.
- Assess relevance of the content to the symposium's themes and audience.
- Check for professionalism in tone, language, and interaction with the audience.
- Share the video with the planning committee for feedback before extending an invitation.

Speaker Confirmation

The speakers need to be confirmed with the co-directors and the general chair before sending out invitations. This ensures that everyone is aligned on the choice of speakers and the event's direction. You can follow this process:

Pre-Invitation Approval Process

Prepare Speaker List:

- Create a table with a list of potential speakers who meet the criteria for the symposium (e.g., alumni, academics, industry professionals, diversity considerations).
- Include brief bios or relevant details about each speaker, along with their proposed topic.
- To ensure that the Speaker Selection Committee selects the most relevant and impactful speakers for the symposium, it's a great idea to have the committee members individually rank the potential speakers.

1. Speaker Ranking Process:

Objective: Rank potential speakers based on their **relevance to the symposium theme**, **research areas**, and **overall interest** to create a well-rounded, interdisciplinary lineup of speakers.

2. Speaker Selection Criteria

Provide committee members with a set of **evaluation criteria** to guide their rankings. This helps standardize the process and ensures that all speakers are evaluated on the same aspects. Criteria should include:

- **Relevance to Symposium Theme**: How well does the speaker's expertise align with the overall theme of the symposium? (e.g., technology in biological sciences, ecological advances, etc.)
- **Research Areas**: Does the speaker's research cover innovative or emerging areas in biological sciences? (e.g., CRISPR, AI in biology, environmental conservation, etc.)
- **Interdisciplinary Impact**: Does the speaker bring an interdisciplinary perspective or engage with other fields within biological sciences?
- **Reputation and Impact**: How well-known or influential is the speaker in their field? Are they recognized as a thought leader?

- **Engagement and Presentation Style**: Is the speaker known for delivering engaging presentations that will keep the audience interested?
- **Potential for Collaboration or Networking**: Could this speaker foster connections that will be valuable to attendees?

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3. Ranking Process

Each committee member should rank the speakers individually based on the criteria provided, using a **rating scale** (e.g., 1 to 5, with 1 being the least favorable and 5 being the most favorable). Here's an example of the ranking process:

- **Speaker Name**: [Insert Name]
    - Relevance to Symposium Theme: (1-5)
    - Research Areas: (1-5)
    - Interdisciplinary Impact: (1-5)
    - Reputation and Impact: (1-5)
    - Engagement and Presentation Style: (1-5)
    - Potential for Collaboration: (1-5)
    - **Total Score**: (Sum of all ratings)

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4. Collecting and Summarizing Results

After all committee members have individually ranked the speakers:

1. **Compile the Scores**: Aggregate the rankings from all members for each speaker. For example, if there are 5 committee members, each speaker's total score would be the sum of all 5 individual scores.
2. **Rank the Speakers**: Sort the speakers based on their total scores. The speakers with the highest scores will be the top candidates.
3. **Identify the Top Speakers**: Based on the rankings, identify the top-ranked speakers who will best fulfill the symposium's needs. If there is a tie in scores, the committee can either deliberate further or use a secondary criterion (e.g., diversity or potential for collaboration) to break the tie.

Send for Approval:

- Share the list with the co-directors and the general chair for review. Create a table that shows the required speaker criteria and the following:

    a) Names and affiliations of the speakers.

    b) Proposed session titles or topics.

    c) Speaker relevance to the symposium theme.

Request Feedback:

- Ask for approval or any feedback on the proposed speakers. Provide space for the co-directors and general chair to suggest any changes, additional speakers, or specific preferences.

Revise the List if Needed:

- Based on the feedback received, revise the speaker list accordingly. Make sure the updated list aligns with the symposium's objectives and any suggestions from the co-directors or general chair.

Final Approval:

- Once the list is finalized, get a final sign-off from the speaker committee co-director and general chair before proceeding to send invitations to the speakers.
- By following this approval process, you ensure that the speaker lineup reflects the vision of the organizing team and is consistent with the event goals.

Inviting the Speakers

Since the student host will be inviting the speakers, the following email can be a guideline

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Subject: Invitation to Speak at the [Symposium Name] – [Date]

Dear [Speaker's Name],

I hope this message finds you well. My name is **[Your Name]**, and I am a student host for the upcoming **[Symposium Name]** at **[University/Institution Name]**. On behalf of the organizing committee, I am excited to invite you to be a speaker at our symposium, which will take place on **[Event Date]** at **[Event Location]** / virtually via **[Platform Name]**.

Our symposium will feature a variety of distinguished experts from both academia and industry in the field of **[Symposium Theme]**, and we believe that your expertise in **[Speaker's Area of Expertise]** would be a valuable addition to the event. We would be honored if you could present a session on **[Proposed Topic or Session Title]**.

Here are some key details about the event:

- **Event Date & Time**: [Date] at [Time] (Include time zone if virtual).

- **Session Duration**: [Length of the session, e.g., 30–40 minutes presentation followed by a Q&A session].
- **Location**: [In-person venue or virtual platform details].
- **Audience**: [Brief description of the audience, e.g., students, academics, industry professionals, etc.].

If you are available to participate, I would be happy to discuss the specifics of your session and any logistical or technical needs you may have. Please let me know if you are interested, and I will send you more information, including the event schedule and any additional details.

Should you need assistance with travel arrangements or accommodations, please feel free to reach out, and I will be happy to coordinate this for you.

We would be thrilled to have you join us for what promises to be an engaging and enriching event. Kindly let me know your availability by **[Response Deadline]**, so we can finalize the event schedule.

Thank you very much for considering our invitation, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Warm regards,
[Your Full Name]
Student Host, [Symposium Name]
[Your Email Address]
[Your Phone Number]
[University/Institution Name]

This version puts the student host in the role of the primary contact for the speaker, with a friendly but professional tone. It also includes details on the speaker's session and any follow-up steps.

When Speakers have confirmed, what is next

Once speakers have confirmed their participation in your symposium, there are several important steps you can take to ensure everything runs smoothly and effectively. Here's a checklist for the next steps after confirmation:

1. Confirm Speaker Details and Logistics

- **Send a Confirmation Email**:
    - Thank the speaker for agreeing to participate and confirm the details, including the date, time, and format of their presentation (virtual or in-person).
    - Include any logistical details like venue, travel arrangements, or tech requirements (if virtual).
    - Ask for additional information, such as a short bio, headshot, or details about their talk.

Example confirmation email: (need to add more)
Subject¿Confirmation.of.Speaker.Participation._[Symposium.Name]
Dear [Speaker's Name],

Thank you for confirming your participation in the [Symposium Name] on [Date]. We are excited to have you as part of the event.

Just to confirm:

- Your presentation will take place at [Time] on [Date].
- [Location/Platform details for in-person/virtual event].
- Please let us know if you need any special technical equipment or accommodations.

Could you please send us a brief biography and a high-resolution photo for promotional purposes by [date]?

Looking forward to your talk!
Best regards,
[Your Name]
[Symposium Contact Information]

2. Finalize Presentation Details

- **Discuss Presentation Format**:
    - Confirm the length of their presentation and Q&A session.
    - If it's a panel or group presentation, clarify the structure, roles, and time limits for each speaker.
    - Ask for any audiovisual or special requirements (e.g., projector, microphone, slides, internet access).
- **Request Presentation Slides**:
    - Ask speakers to send their slides or any other materials ahead of time (usually 3–7 days before the event), to ensure compatibility with the event system or to help with pre-event preparation.

3. Prepare Speaker Bios and Promotional Materials (Marketing Committee)

- **Promote the Speaker**:
    - Share the speaker's bio, topic, and headshot on your event website, social media, and any marketing materials.
    - Create promotional content for social media to highlight their involvement. This can include announcements or countdowns leading up to the event.
- **Create Event Program**:
    - Include each speaker's bio, talk title, and session time in the event program or agenda.
    - If the event is virtual, provide clear links and instructions for accessing the session.

4. Technical Setup (Virtual or In-Person)

- **Test Technology**:
    - If the symposium is virtual, arrange a test run with the speaker to check their internet connection, camera, microphone, and presentation slides.
    - For in-person events, ensure any necessary equipment (e.g., projector, microphone, computer) is available and functioning properly.
- **Provide Support Information**:

- Share instructions for logging into virtual platforms (e.g., Zoom, Teams) or for in-person logistics (e.g., where to park, event check-in procedures).
- If the speaker needs assistance (e.g., someone to help with slides or setting up), confirm who will be available to assist.

5. Coordinate Travel and Accommodations

Need a student host for each speaker

- **Travel Arrangements** (Carla)
  - If the speaker is traveling, confirm their travel details, including flights, transportation, and accommodation. Ensure that these logistics align with their schedule.
- **Provide Travel Reimbursement Information**: (Carla)
  - Let the speaker know what expenses (e.g., airfare, hotel) will be reimbursed, if applicable. Provide instructions on how to submit receipts.

6. Share Event Schedule with Speakers

- **Send Event Agenda**:
  - Share the full event schedule with the speaker(s), including when they are expected to speak, when the sessions begin and end, and any break times or networking opportunities.
- **Speaker Session Reminders**:
  - Send reminders a few days before the event with all the relevant session details, including where and when their presentation will occur, and any last-minute instructions.

7. Prepare for Q&A Sessions

- **Moderate or Review the Format**:
  - If you have a moderator, make sure they are prepared with questions or guidelines to facilitate the Q&A session after the speaker's presentation.
  - Consider preparing some backup questions in case the audience is slow to ask questions.

8. Confirm Day-of Details

- **Speaker Check-in**:
    - If in person, have a designated check-in area for speakers to ensure they're aware of the schedule and any last-minute changes.
    - For virtual events, provide the speaker with the necessary access link early in the day of the event.
- **Provide a Speaker Packet (Optional)**:
    - Consider giving the speaker a packet of relevant information, such as an event schedule, attendee demographics, and any other helpful information they may need to know.

9. Thank You and Follow-up

- **Thank You Notes**:
    - After the event, send a personalized thank you note to express your appreciation for their time, effort, and contribution to the symposium.
- **Post-Event Survey**:
    - Request feedback from the speaker to understand their experience and identify areas for improvement for future events.

10. Engage with Attendees on Social Media

- **Highlight Speaker Engagement**:
    - During and after the event, use social media to thank the speaker for their contribution and engage with attendees by sharing highlights, quotes, or takeaways from the talk.

By staying organized and communicating clearly, you can ensure that your speakers are well-prepared, have a positive experience, and contribute effectively to the success of the symposium. Would you like help drafting a speaker confirmation or reminder email?

Student Hosts

Since the **student host** will be the **main contact with speakers** and responsible for **preparing the agenda for their visit**, here are the detailed tasks and responsibilities that would fall under their role:

1. Communicating with Speakers

- **Pre-Event Communication**:
    - Reach out to each speaker ahead of time to confirm participation and address any logistical questions.
    - Share the symposium's agenda, the date, time, and virtual/in-person event details.
    - Collect necessary materials from the speakers, such as presentation slides, bios, and any specific AV requirements or requests.
    - Provide clear instructions about their session, including the time allocated for their presentation, Q&A, and any other relevant details (e.g., moderator guidelines, tech setup).
- **Confirm Event Details**:
    - Send a final reminder 1-2 days before the event to confirm that everything is in place.
    - Provide clear instructions on arrival time (for in-person events) or login details (for virtual events).
    - Clarify any last-minute changes or additions to the schedule.
- **Act as a Liaison**:
    - Be available to answer any questions or address concerns from speakers leading up to and during the event. This can include troubleshooting technical issues, helping them with presentations, or providing any logistical support they may need.

2. Preparing the Agenda for Speakers' Visit

The **student host** will need to **coordinate** and **structure** the agenda, ensuring a smooth experience for the speakers. Here's a breakdown:

- **Create the Agenda**:

    - Work with the organizing team to draft the event schedule. Ensure it aligns with speaker availability and the overall event flow.
    - Include the time slots for each speaker's presentation, Q&A sessions, breaks, and networking events.
    - Prepare a clear and concise document that outlines:
        - **Speaker Names and Titles**
        - **Session Times and Lengths**
        - **Location/Platform Details (if virtual)**
        - **Technical Requirements (AV setup, slides, etc.)**
        - **Break Times, Lunch, or Networking Sessions**
- **Send the Agenda to Speakers**:
    - Ensure each speaker has a personalized copy of the agenda detailing the time of their session, how they will be introduced, and any other specific instructions.
    - Make sure the speakers know where they should be (room or virtual platform) and when.
- **Coordinate with Technical Team**:
    - Confirm the technical setup (for virtual events: software, microphone, video checks; for in-person events: microphones, projectors, etc.).
    - Ensure speakers are aware of any technical setup they need to complete before their session.
- **Prepare Speaker Materials**:
    - Gather any additional speaker materials or presentations and ensure they are ready for the day of the event.
    - Make sure these materials are properly formatted and uploaded or printed ahead of time.

3. Speaker and Event Schedule Coordination

- **Track Session Times**:

    - Ensure the event stays on track by managing session times and providing timely reminders to speakers before their session begins.
    - Ensure each speaker is aware of when to start, when to wrap up, and when the Q&A session will begin.
- **Provide Speaker Support on the Day**:
    - Be the main point of contact for any speaker needs (e.g., assistance with presentations, last-minute changes, technical issues).
    - Ensure they are comfortable and prepared for their presentation, and help with any last-minute requests.

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4. On the Day of the Event

- **Welcome Speakers**:
    - Greet the speakers upon their arrival (whether virtual or in person), help them get settled, and provide any last-minute details.
    - Ensure they have everything they need for their session, including technical support, water, or any additional materials.
- **Manage Transitions**:
    - Help manage smooth transitions between sessions, ensuring speakers start and finish on time.
    - Provide timely reminders about session times (e.g., when there are 5 minutes left in their session).
- **Assist with Q&A**:
    - For virtual events, monitor the chat or Q&A platform to collect audience questions.
    - In-person, assist the moderator with managing audience questions.

5. Post-Event Responsibilities

- **Thank You Notes**:
    - Send thank-you emails to all speakers, expressing appreciation for their participation.

    - Provide any follow-up information, such as the recording of their presentation or links to other post-event resources.

- **Feedback Collection**:
    - Gather feedback from the speakers on their experience, addressing any issues they encountered and identifying areas of improvement for future events.
    - If the speakers have any post-event requests (e.g., sharing slides or networking), coordinate that with the event team.

By handling these tasks, the student host will be instrumental in ensuring the speakers have a seamless experience and that the event flows smoothly.