Presentation Guidelines

Your faculty mentor and the honors coordinator should have hard copies of your papers, but your task at the Honors Forum is to present your study in 8-10 minutes to an audience unfamiliar with your topic.

The National Collegiate Honors Council recommends three steps to good presentations:

Step One — Complete a Background Check. Find out the purpose of the session, audience, time limits, formality, etc. Expect 5-20 people (students and faculty). The purpose is to present an overview of your research project and findings in a student friendly academic setting. The goal is to learn how to present findings in an interesting and succinct fashion and how to answer questions about your work. There is no dress code per se, but I recommend erring on the side of looking professional.

Step Two — Adapt Your Research or Project for the Presentation. Just like speech class, develop an outline of talking points. You and your mouth are the most reliable format, but enhancements such as handouts, PowerPoint, or slides can be useful. Introduce your project and its purpose, give selective highlights of your research, then wrap up with your conclusions. Make sure the audience knows what it should learn from your talk.

Be ready to answer questions. Nobody will be attacking you, but part of the scholarly process is to probe logic, source credibility, and other aspects of the research process. If somebody is critical, you can reply, "I'll have to think about that."

Step Three — The Presentation Itself. Again you will only have 8-10 minutes to make your presentation. Selecting and summarizing material can be a challenge, but it must be done.

DO NOT READ YOUR PAPER OR READ OFF POWERPOINT/OVERHEAD SCREENS. Be engaging and prepared. Make eye contact. Try to get the audience to interact with you. Convey your excitement.

Check out the room. Test your technology to make sure it will work. Be prepared.

Practice, practice, and practice some more until you are fairly confident in how you expect the presentation to go. Bring a friend to the session. Take a deep breath and relax. You know your project.