

APS Professional Skills Training Course Rated a Success

In January 2008, the American Physiological Society conducted its fifth live professional skills training course for graduate and postdoctoral students. This was the first time both courses, "Writing and Reviewing for Scientific Journals," and "Making Scientific Presentations: Critical First Skills," were run concurrently. It was also the first time the courses were subsidized by the APS with the remaining costs paid by attendees. Additionally, 26 minority students were given travel fellowships through NIGMS that covered course registration and travel expenses.

The writing and reviewing course provided upper level graduate students and postdoctoral students with training on the skills needed for writing and reviewing their first author manuscript for scientific journals in biomedicine. The presentation skills course was geared toward early career graduate students and the skills needed to create and present their first author posters at meetings.

The instructors for the "Writing and Reviewing" course were: Dale Benos, Univ. of Alabama, Birmingham; Mark

Knuepfer, Saint Louis University; Patricia Molina, Louisiana State Univ.; Kim Barrett, Univ. of California, San Diego; Robert Hester, Univ. of Mississippi; L. Gabriel Navar, Tulane Univ.; Susan Barman, Michigan State Univ.; and Jane Reckelhoff, Mississippi State Univ.

The instructors for the "Presentation Skills" course were: Carole Liedtke, Case Western Reserve Univ.; Rob Carroll, Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina Univ.; Ann Schreihoffer, Medical College of Georgia; Thomas Schmidt, Univ. of Iowa

Students completed a pre-course survey and a post-course survey. The overall mean rating for the usefulness of the Writing and Reviewing course was 4.8 out of 5. The overall mean rating for the Presentation Skills course was 5.0 out of 5. Students also rated their skills before and after the workshops. The Writing and Reviewing students rated their writing and reviewing skills as 3.0 on average out of 5 at the beginning of the course (where 5 = "excellent" and 1 = "very weak"). At the completion, stu-

dents rated their skills as 4.3 on average out of 5. The Presentation Skills students rated their overall presentation skills as 2.8 on average out of 5 at the beginning of the course and at the end of the workshop they rated themselves as 4.6 on average. Therefore, in both courses, students felt they had improved their overall skills. Following the course, students completed a final "test," critiquing a standard abstract to assess student skills in applying what they learned at the course.

Overall, the courses were highly successful. Next year's courses are set for January 14-17 at Disney's Contemporary Resort in Lake Buena Vista, FL. The focus for the Writing and Reviewing course in 2009 will be cell and molecular physiology, comparative physiology, endocrinology, GI physiology, and respiration. However, all students are encouraged to apply. The Presentation Skills course is open to any student in physiology. (<http://www.the-aps.org/education/profSkills2007/index.htm>) ❖

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS Training

Interested in...**improving your manuscript writing** or **improving your poster presentation?**

Hear what a past participant had to say:
"Writing the paper and being able to hear critics from the whole group is an experience to remember. So many good ideas and critics in so little time...wow!"



Who should apply: graduate students and post docs in all areas of physiology

What: Course in writing and reviewing for scientific journals and poster presentation skills

Where: Disney World, Lake Buena Vista, Florida

When: Every January

Why: The programs give students the opportunity to learn critical skills: how to network, give a formal introduction, and present effectively. The courses also aim to improve the technical aspects of student abstracts, manuscripts, and posters.

Learn more at:
www.the-aps.org/education/profSkills/