Creating a Poster Presentation: A Guide for Novices

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INTRODUCTION

Background & Significance

- Many students have difficulty creating a poster presentation for the very first time and are prone to postpone asking for assistance until the last minute.

- Asking for assistance or clarification of instructions early in the game almost always results in better outcomes!

- MS PowerPoint can be a very effective visual tool if used correctly. Because of its capabilities, however, it can also be intimidating, resulting in frustration and enough discouragement to abandon the project.
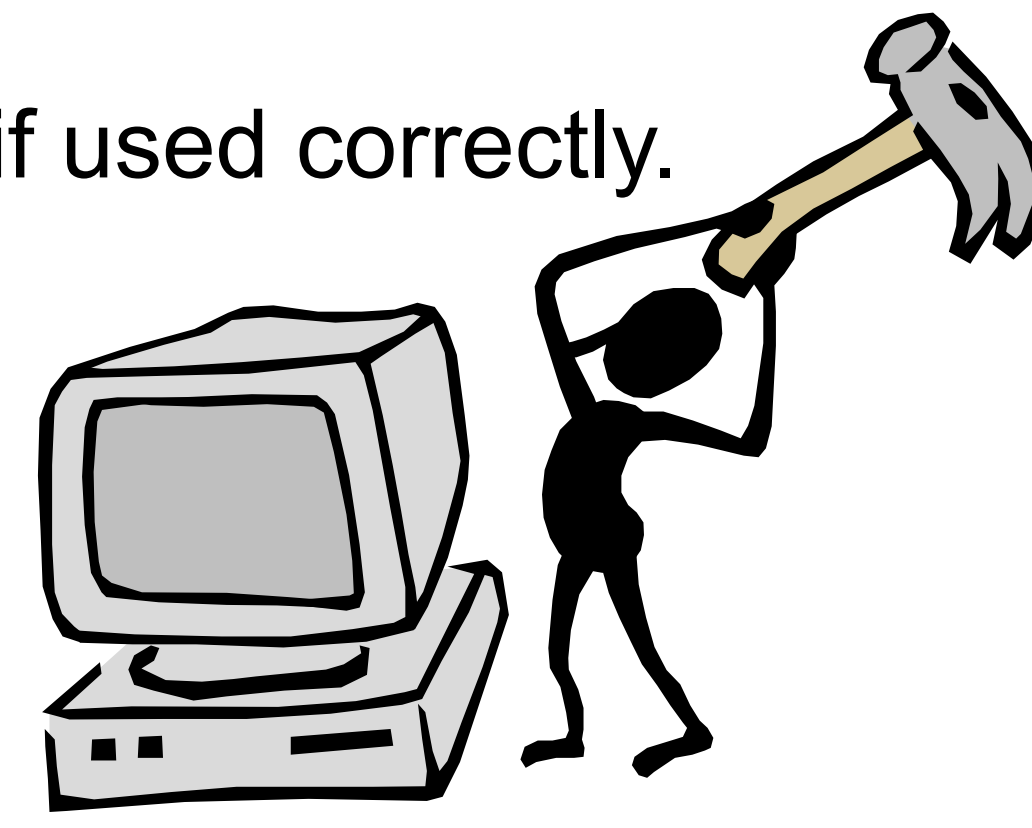
Purpose

- To design a user-friendly template to facilitate poster-making for novice presenters.

Specific Aims

- To assist in lowering frustration levels for first-time poster creators.
- To reduce incidence of mental stress and increase confidence levels among first-time poster presenters.
- To decrease drop-out rates among potential presenters.

THE MINDSET

You Can Do It!

- Think of designing a poster as a **creative** endeavor. The technical portions of your research project have been completed or are by now firmly in place. Switch gears and let your creative juices flow!

http://www.wittysparks.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/05/positive-attitude-2.gif

- Outline the most important points of your research—background and significance, purpose, and specific aims. Describe your procedures and your sample. Present your findings and discuss them.

- Enthusiasm is contagious. Let your passion for your research ignite the same thing in your audience! But most of all, be true to yourself.
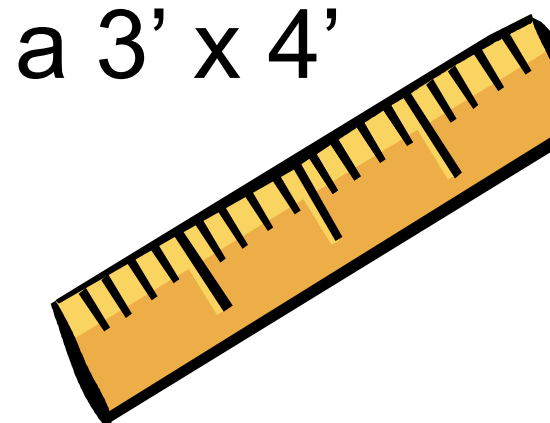
THE BASICS

Design and Poster Size

- As a general rule, the College of Nursing uses two basic templates: solid blue, and monochromatic blue, as seen on the examples in the Results section.

- Most posters are either 3' x 4' or 3' x 5'. To achieve this finished size, the page must be set up as either a 46" or 56" width by 34.5" height for a 3' x 4' or 3' x 5' poster, respectively.

Titles, Headings and Sub-headings

- The main title is usually in boldface and orange in color. Authors should ideally have their credentials after their names (also in boldface, but white in color), and the institution name is in italics (not boldface).

- Main headings are usually in blue boxes, while sub-headings are in orange font, bold, and underlined. Default font is Times New Roman, but other basic fonts are acceptable too. The point is to keep it simple. Headings and sub-headings are meant to be informative, not decorative or distracting.

Body and Content

- Always keep in mind that a poster is *a **visual medium***. It should be appealing to the eye and readable from a distance of 5 - 7 feet without getting eyestrain. You may be tempted to elaborate, but lengthy explanations may actually work against you. Bulleted thoughts are usually more effective. Pictures and graphs add interest too. Remember that your audience will be browsing many posters over a short period and will not have much time to spend reading. The idea is to "capture" your audience's attention. Once captured, they will want to ask questions. This is why your presence is required: to answer questions they may have. ***If you succeed in piquing their curiosity, then your poster is a success***.

- If you use original pictures and drawings, that is well and good. If you "borrow" them from the internet, remember to credit the website from which they came. ***Make sure they are not copyright protected***.

- Too many words can lessen the visual appeal of the poster, while too many pictures can distract the audience from the message. **Try to keep it balanced**. Give the information and just use images to add a finishing touch.

- Try to keep your text fonts uniform in size and style, unless size and style changes are for intentional emphasis.

- **Remember,** If your research was funded or sponsored, be sure to indicate this in the upper right portion of the poster header (as seen in the template).

RESULTS
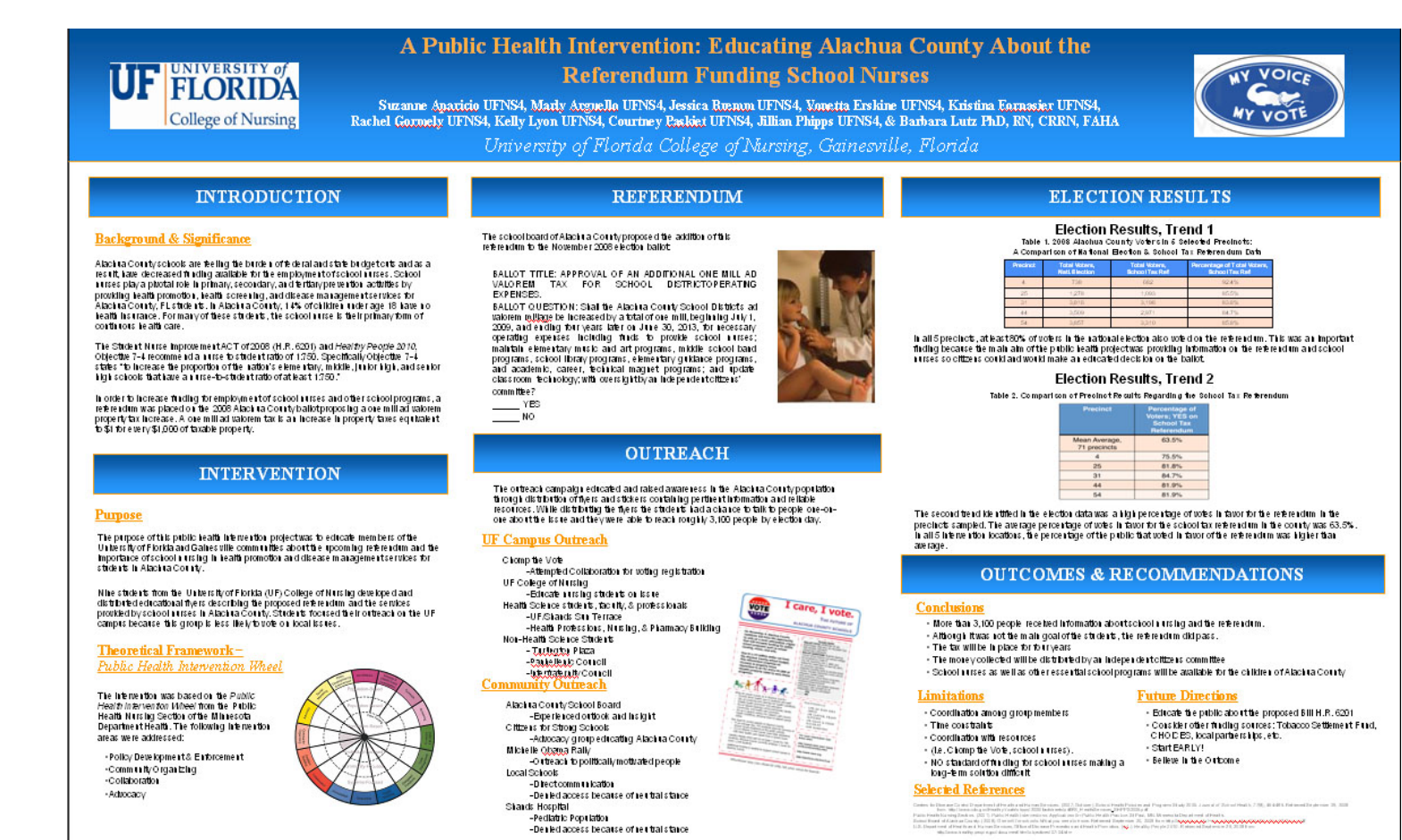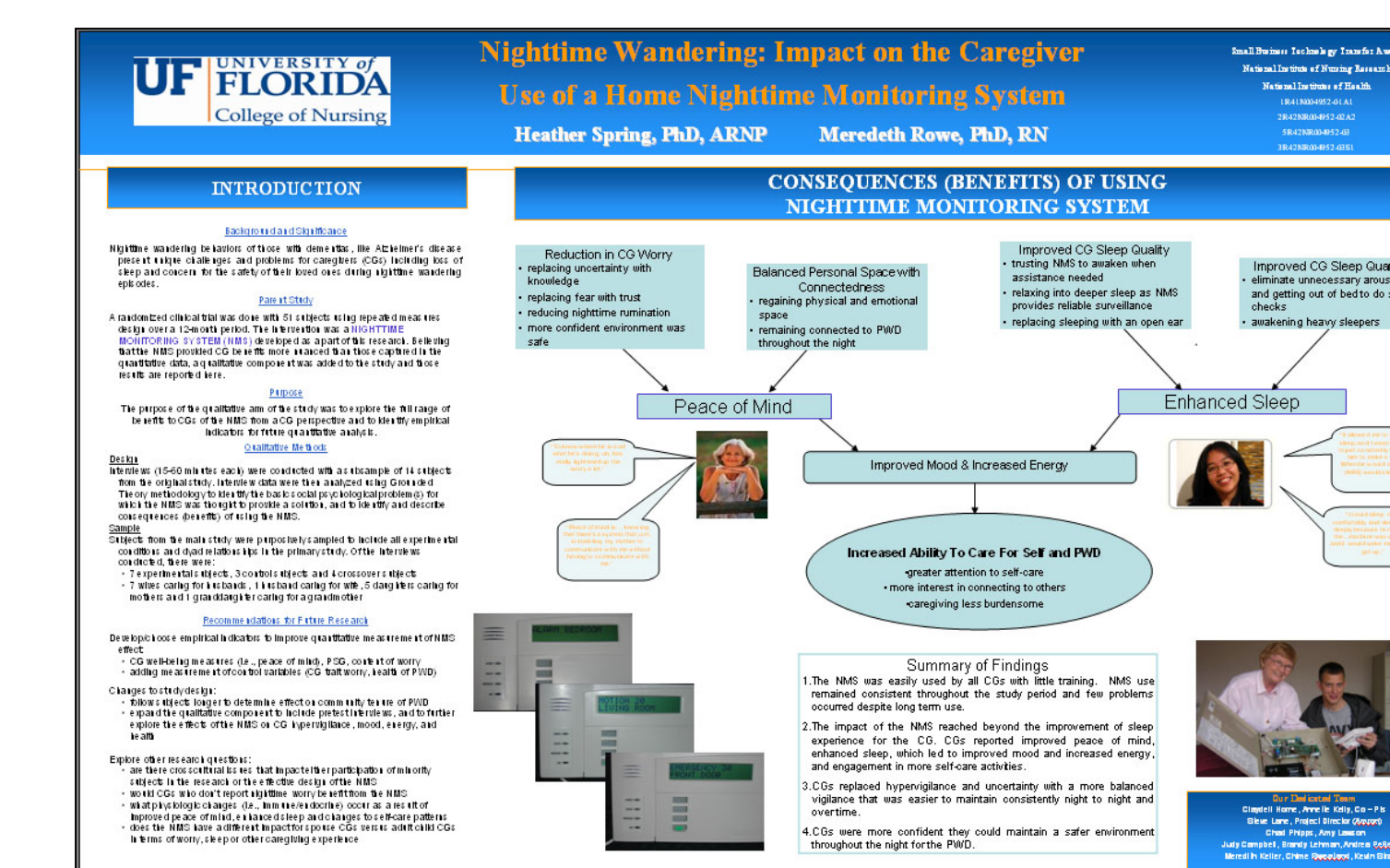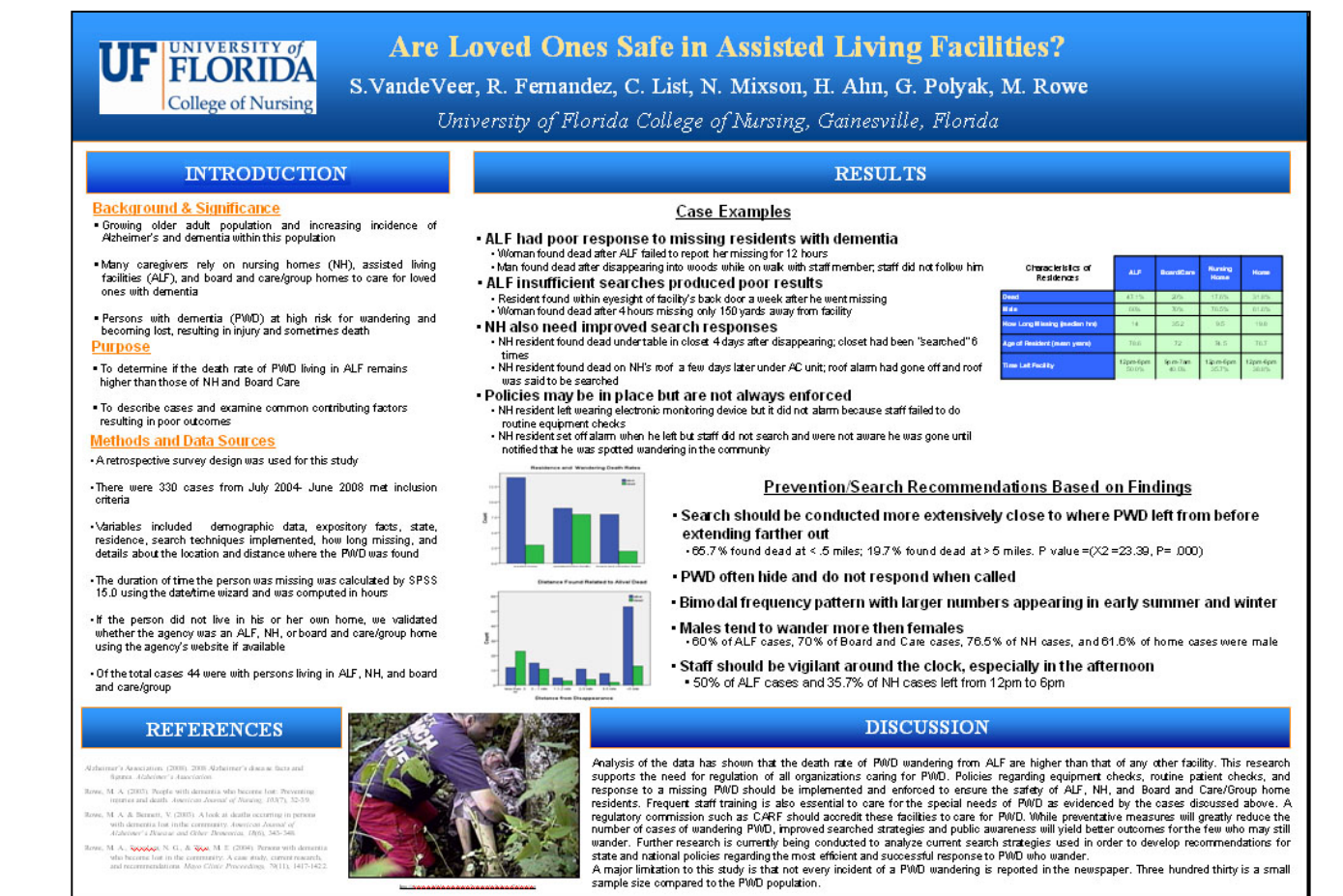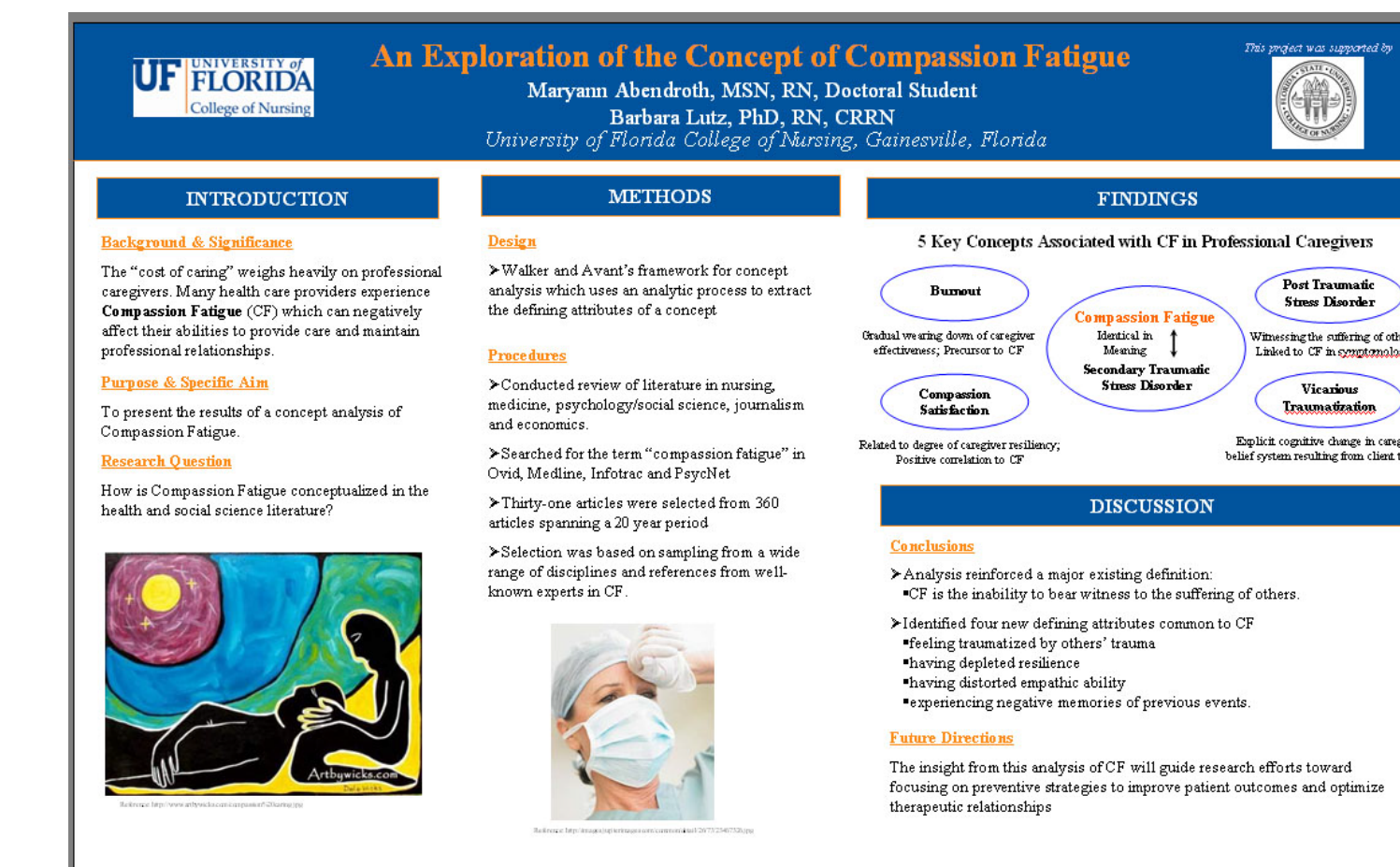
*These posters are being used with permission from the Faculty co-authors

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

- Your poster isn't just a presentation of your research. It will also say something about you, the researcher. Always do a spelling and grammar check. Better yet, get a friend or colleague to look it over and critique it.

http://www.whitehead.mit.edu/news/paradigm/spring_2008/img/peer_review.jpg

- The Research Assistants (RAs) at the Office for Research Support (ORS) are available to assist you in the alignment, formatting, and printing of your poster. Editing, writing, searching for/preparing graphics, or revising content ***are not*** in the realm of RA duties. You must take ownership of your poster!

- Resources for making a poster presentation are available online. The staff at the ORS is happy to furnish you with guidelines and tips on poster-making as well. Just ask!

- Once again, timing is important. The sooner you begin the process, the better the outcome. When preparing for a conference or a presentation, start early. Make an appointment to work with an RA well in advance of your deadline.