Tips for Attending Professional Conferences

Before the Conference:

- Look for sources of funding for presenting at conferences.
- Have business cards made to hand out during networking opportunities
- Have your materials proofread, finalized, and printed weeks in advance
- Be sure your hotel reservations are made and the fee for the conference is paid
- Practice your presentation with friends or faculty
- Familiarize yourself with the city and the location the conference will be held, especially if you will need to utilize public transportation while you are there.
- Bring copies of your resume/CV
- Bring a portfolio rather than a backpack to keep your materials in order

During the Conference:

- Join the conference’s Facebook page or follow their Twitter handle for updates and online interaction with other attendees
- Attend as many presentations as you can to get the most out of the conference
- Use every chance you can for networking
- Before you leave your hotel complete a mental or physical checklist of the things you need for the day, especially on the day you are scheduled to present
- Use the restroom and eat snacks between presentations, leaving during a presentation is rude
- While you are presenting remember that you are the expert on this project and you probably know more about it than anyone else in the room, so be confident
- Maintain a professional but friendly demeanor. You want to be taken seriously as an academic but you also want to be approachable for networking opportunities

After the Conference:

- Follow up with the people you met by sending them an email after the conference
- Share the information that you learned with colleagues at your university
- Incorporate valid suggestions or critiques from the conference into your paper or project
- Join relevant organizations or read books that were suggested to you at the conference
- Keep your eye out for more conferences
**Tips from the Panelists**

**Monica Ehn, Psychology: Clinical Science:** I make a sheet where people can write their name, email, and any questions they might have. This is a good way to network and inform others about your work especially if you have a limited amount of time to answer questions. I look for fun things to do in the city where the conference is held and try to do at least a couple of things when there are not conference related activities. Conferences can be a great opportunity to meet people and explore new places.

**Megan Butz, Speech-Language Pathology:** What helped me was reading over my research several more times during the few weeks leading up to the conferences. I had friends/family ask me questions or for a summary of the research so I could practice being put on the spot with some tough questions. That made me feel more confident going into each presentation. Another thing I would say is that presenters should feel confident because no one knows your research as well as YOU! If you make a small mistake, chances are, no one will know and you can just note the correction for the next time you are asked.

**Kong Chen, MBA and Leisure, Youth, and Human Services:** To fully enjoy the experience, I am always ready for everything, physically and mentally. Realizing my presentation was scheduled to 8 am would not throw me off. I stayed focused and tried to have a good day even if there was only one person who attended my session. I stayed humble when a big name dropped by my table and complimented on my work. Last but not least, although it's against my best interest, I was ready to pad on a pound or two with all the gourmet food I devoured.

**Robin Summers, Women’s and Gender Studies:** Depending on the size of the conference, I've always found it important to go over the list of sessions being held for the duration you will be there and decide on a few top choices ahead of time. Many sessions fill up quickly, so you have to prepare and know where you're going prior to the time each session is held. With only ten or fifteen minutes between sessions, it's difficult to decide which session to attend and get there before the room is full.