

July 16, 2015

TO: BIO student
FROM: Seminar coordinator
RE: BIO/CHM475 Presentation

This is an actual feedback letter for a student who earned an "A" in seminar. Some details have been changed to protect the student's identity.

My colleagues and I thank you for your informative and interesting presentation in seminar this week on “Molecular analysis of several aging-related genes”. In general, the faculty and students agreed that this was an impressively advanced project which required a lot of depth of knowledge and led to some very interesting findings.

Given the nature of the project, you were faced with a daunting set of background information to convey to a general audience. Despite getting out of sequence once, your introductory material was clear and fit together well. Many students commented that they appreciated the clear connections to human health. You had a large number of references to highly relevant published work, all of which was explained well to the audience. It was a little hazy where the *yfgA* gene fit in with the rest of the project, but otherwise your background was impressive.

The data that you presented told a very interesting story. You did an exemplary job of guiding the audience from one result to its conclusion to a new hypothesis and the resulting experiment. On occasion, the larger picture got lost, in part because there was a lot of information for your audience to keep track of. In general, the graphs presenting your data were very strong, with the exception that it appears that the x-axis of the ReagentA data should have shown that these were three different samples. You patiently and clearly led your audience through a good analysis of the data. Is there a way to conduct a statistical test on the differences of relative survival? Some members of the audience wondered why you began the competition experiments with different ratios of cells but then didn't analyze if that made a difference in the outcome.

The mechanics of your presentation were generally strong. Occasionally you were a little hard to hear (especially at the ends of sentences), went a bit fast or spent too much time looking at the slides, but those were exceptions and not the rule. You projected an authority and confidence to your audience as well as seeming friendly and approachable. Your slides were generally well-constructed, enhanced your presentation and flowed well from one to the next.

We have assigned a grade of A to your presentation. Please be aware that this grade may be modified by your attendance and participation, as described on the course website. Congratulations on a great presentation and best wishes for your future.

July 17, 2015

TO: Biology student
FROM: Seminar coordinator
RE: BIO/CHM475 Presentation

This is an actual feedback letter for a student who earned a "B" in seminar. Some details have been changed to protect the student's identity.

My colleagues and I thank you for your presentation in seminar this week on "The cellular effects of a human virus." In general, the faculty and students found you very knowledgeable on the subject and enjoyed your presentation.

Your background was thorough but would benefit from being a little broader and starting with a quick overview of the goal of the project to help the audience see what they need to get from the background information. The way that you presented some of the information was too advanced for most of the audience. You used lots of jargon and needed to walk through the interferon pathway slide and the virus replication slide a little slower emphasizing the key pieces of information that pertained to your virus. Since a lot of the material you presented was new to the students, take some time to teach them your pathway and define more of your terms.

You presented impressive data with beautiful images of your cells. Most of the students in the audience are not familiar with cell culture and therefore in the future I encourage you to consider giving more background on this system. Your explanation of staining for your assay was great but you could introduce the idea of this cellular phenomenon beforehand to make sure the audience all have the necessary background to interpret your results. Also, you did a great job explaining the data for the flow cytometry experiment but would have benefited from providing a background slide on how the FACS data was actually collected. Your figures were clearly labeled, which made it very clear to follow what was going on in your results slides.

You demonstrated excellent confidence and knowledge about your research topic. It was clear that you really enjoyed the experience working at a large research university for the summer and gained a deep understanding of your project. The faculty appreciated your endorsement of the REU program as well as your research here at North Central College. Your volume was great and you presented at an appropriate speed for the audience to follow you. I have a few suggestions for you to improve the overall presentation in the future. Include more images in your background slides so that they are not only text and enlarge the text that you do have on the slides, but be careful with overly complex slides like the pathway slides. If a slide contains a lot of information that the audience doesn't need, direct their attention using boxes or arrows. Lastly, be sure to keep your language professional in a formal presentation: there are other ways to make a point or to provoke a laugh that will leave a more positive impression.

We have assigned a grade of B+ to your presentation. Please be aware that this grade may be modified by your attendance and participation, as described on the course website. Best wishes for your future.

This is an actual feedback letter for a student who earned a "C" in seminar. Some details have been changed to protect the student's identity.



Division of Science

July 16, 2015

TO: BIO Student
FROM: Seminar coordinator
RE: BIO/CHM 475

My colleagues and I commend you on your presentation in Seminar. You presented an interesting study on *Plantus plantus* growth during under environmental stress conditions. However there are many concerns.

I believe your presentation would have benefitted from sharing it with a faculty member that is currently on campus as there were some pitfalls throughout the presentation. Additionally some of the experimental flaws were hard to overlook. You were certainly aware of some of those pitfalls, such as the absence of light at 0°C. However, keeping these plants at these temperatures for a full week or at such a drastic temperature below the ideal while the high end temperature was just a bit above the ideal temperature was perplexing. You must know what your measuring devices are doing. It was evident that you did not know what the "Li6400/XT" instrument was doing (it measures the amount of CO₂ taken in). You should also call it by its more appropriate name – a portable photosynthesis instrument (not a "machine" or "thing"). You will need to define all of your acronyms (HAP, HPB, etc.). Use more appropriate language such as "I hypothesized..." rather than "I was hoping..." or "literature states that..." instead of "A lot of people say that...". You did not determine whether or not the stress genes were on or off as you claimed, because your experiment was not designed to do so. Many of your slides were too wordy, and you read from them too often. Make sure that your slides are free of typos. You showed your references slide for 3 seconds which is not enough time to see anything. You certainly had time to further explain more of the experiment as the seminar was only 16 minutes long.

Your peers thought had an interesting experiment and that you started out with some very interesting diagrams of how conditions around the world have affected plants and plant production which nicely engaged the audience. However, they shared many of the concerns mentioned above. They found the

methods and results confusing and were even more confused after the Q&A session. Additionally they recommended that you speak a little louder and practice the talk more. Your “Future research” lacked creativity in that “more trials” or “longer trials” is very low hanging fruit. What else could you do to improve the experiment?

We have assigned a grade of C+ to your presentation. Please be aware that this grade may be modified by your attendance and participation, as described in the course syllabus. Congratulations on the completion of your presentation and best wishes for your future.