Strategic Conferencing: Opportunities for Success

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Attending professional conferences provides meaningful opportunities for career advancement despite the significant investment of time and funding. A strategic approach is presented to assist faculty in maximizing outcomes related to academic conference attendance.1–3

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### BEFORE THE CONFERENCE

#### Assess Purpose
- Consider goals, such as:
  - Developing skills;
  - Networking and collaboration;
  - Disseminating scholarly work;
  - Receiving feedback on preliminary findings;
  - Acquiring research updates.

#### Prepare a High-Quality Proposal and Presentation
- Consult formatting and submission requirements.
- Solicit feedback from colleagues.
- Rehearse presentation and elevator speech.
- Complete presentations or poster and send to organizer/printer.

#### Organize Logistics
- Secure funding through institutions, sponsoring organizations, and/or scholarships.
- Arrange registration, transportation, and hotel early.

#### Review Attendee List
- Identify and contact individuals by field, areas of interest, or proximity; include known colleagues.
- Familiarize yourself with their work.
- Pack business cards.

#### Prioritize Sessions and Activities
- Revisit reasons for attending.
- Identify sessions that best match career goals, institution’s needs and mission, and/or attendance goals.
- Divide and conquer relevant topics and sessions with colleagues.

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### DURING THE CONFERENCE

#### Bring your Best Self for the Presentation
- Arrive early, check video/audio.
- Deliver material with confidence and clarity.
- Stay afterward to answer questions and meet the audience.

#### Connect and Network
- Engage in social media, interest groups, and networking events.
- Facilitate sessions, review proposals, or join committees.
- Meet new and existing colleagues to expand and maintain network.
- Note reminders of conversations and follow-up plans on business cards received.

#### Practice Self-Care
- Take breaks to cultivate resiliency with adequate meals, sleep, and physical activity.
- Enjoy conference location.

#### Promote Self and Others
- Support colleagues by attending their presentations and promoting group achievements.
- Dress appropriately for occasions.
- Seek out presenters to meet.

#### Be Flexible
- Have a general plan for time allocation, while staying open to serendipitous networking opportunities and new learning.
- Attend sessions that address unfamiliar topics.

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### AFTER THE CONFERENCE

#### Say “Thank You”
- Thank those who made attendance possible.

#### Update Your Curriculum Vitae
- Add presentations, meeting attendance, and/or volunteer activities to curriculum vitae.

#### Highlight Achievements
- Share presentations and photographs with colleagues and home institution.

#### Follow-up with Colleagues
- Send follow-up emails to colleagues whose business cards you collected.
- Identify potential opportunities for collaboration.

#### Plan Next Steps
- Revise existing goals.
- Plan for future learning and meeting attendance.
- Consider publication opportunities.

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Disclaimer: The opinions and assertions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Uniformed Services University of the Department of Defense.

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References:

Additional online resources: Presenter Guide recommended by E-Learn: World Conference on E-learning; How To Get The Most Out Of Attending Conferences And Events: Going Up? Tips for the Medical Educators’ “Elevator Pitch.”