Brookhaven Lecture Series: Speaker Guidelines

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I. Purpose

Since 1960, when the late nuclear physicist Gertrude Scharff-Goldhaber — who was BNL's first woman Ph.D. scientific staff member — established the series, Brookhaven Lectures have been offered monthly to a Lab-wide audience during the academic calendar year by members of the BNL's scientific staff. To fill the lecture-year schedule (http://www.bnl.gov/bnlweb/pubaf/lectures/current_year.asp), scientific departments and divisions recruit one of their researchers present a Brookhaven Lecture to an audience of mostly other scientists from across the Lab.

In your 50-minute talk and during the 10-minute Q&A following it, you are not only presenting your work to fellow scientists both within and outside of your field, plus to members of the support staff, but you are also representing your department or division before the rest of the Laboratory.

The goal of your Brookhaven Lecture is to explain to your audience the reasons:

- why the research under discussion is of interest to the audience and the speaker
- why the research is important within your field of science and is supported by the agency(ies) that fund it
- what role the speaker and your collaborators have played in the research
- why the research is done within your department, division, center, or office

So, unlike when presenting before your colleagues at a seminar, colloquium or conference, you do not have to prove anything from first principles. Instead, your Brookhaven Lecture audience will assume that you know what you are talking about and that your peers have evaluated your work.

Thus your goal is to convince your Brookhaven Lecture audience that your work matters in the world of science — and is of interest to them and you.

II. Schedule

Since the goal, occasion and audience for this lecture is different than those for most scientific presentations, the following schedule has been devised to help you succeed in presenting a good lecture.

The Brookhaven Lecture Committee (BLC) representative from your department or division (http://www.bnl.gov/bnlweb/pubaf/lectures/committee.asp) is here to help guide you in meeting your lecture deadlines. The BLC chair, vice-chair and others on the Committee are among those whom you may also enlist for assistance.

A. LECTURE ABSTRACT: The schedule of lectures for each year is announced via the BLC's Web page (http://www.bnl.gov/bnlweb/pubaf/lectures/current_year.asp) and the Brookhaven Bulletin in late August or early September. As part of that announcement, an abstract of each talk is published on the Web. Therefore, when you agree to present a Brookhaven Lecture or by mid-August, please submit a half-dozen sentence abstract summarizing your talk to your BLC rep, which then will be posted on the Web.

B. INFORMAL MEETING: Six weeks to one month before your lecture, if they haven't made an appointment with you already, then please arrange to meet with your BLC representative, so you may go over this document and the lecture schedule. The objective of your meeting is so that you understand the expectations of your presentation, your deadlines, and the resources available to you.

C. PRESENTATION DEVELOPMENT: After meeting with your BLC rep, please do begin developing your 50-minute presentation, consulting our suggested guidelines (see II. PowerPoint Presentation, below) regarding talk structure, slide quantity and quality, etc.

D. DEPARTMENT/DIVISION REHEARSAL: About a month before your lecture, your BLC representative or you will hold a rehearsal of your talk before members of your department or division upon whom you both agree who are necessary and/or would offer you constructive criticism on how to improve your talk. In addition, the BLC chair, vice-chair, past chair, and the ex officio Community Relations Office member who coordinates the Lab's speakers' bureau will be invited, as they have proven themselves to be helpful to lecturers seeking to make their presentations better.

For this rehearsal, please provide everyone with a copy of the handout, and ask your BLC rep or someone else to take slide-by-slide notes on the suggestions made.

Depending upon how much revision is necessary following this rehearsal, many speakers have found it helpful to call together a sub-group of those who attended the department/division rehearsal, so they may review the revised talk one or more times before it is presented to the full Brookhaven Lecture Committee (see E., below).

D. PUBLICITY: Two or three weeks before your lecture, you will be contacted by a Brookhaven Bulletin staffer, who will write an announcement of your lecture. As an expansion of your lecture abstract, the Bulletin announcement usually is a three-paragraph description, presenting background on your field of research relevant to your work, a description of your work and its significance, and a discussion of where work is headed. In other words, the article follows the suggested structure of your talk (see II. PowerPoint Presentation, below), so please supply the necessary information accordingly. The Bulletin announcement will conclude with your CV and an invitation to the story's readers to join you for a meal and discussion (see H., below).

You will also be contacted by a Lab photographer, who will take your picture in a setting in which you work. Unless you exclusively work in front of a computer, please try to pick a location other than at your desk and please include other equipment or instruments with which you work. Your photograph will be used with the Bulletin announcement and on *@Brookhaven TODAY*, the BNL intranet homepage.

E. LECTURE COMMITTEE REHERSAL: About two weeks before your lecture, usually at 12 noon on a Tuesday in Berkner Hall Room C or D, you will present your talk to the full Brookhaven Lecture Committee. Again, please provide those in attendance with a handout of your talk; so you are free to concentrate on your talk, your BLC rep will take notes on the committee's suggestions.

If all went well during and after the department/division rehearsal(s), then most of your work is done, and the committee's suggestions will be mostly fine points. If, however, there is more work to be done, then please do call upon your BLC rep, members of your department/division, the BLC chair, vice-chair, past chair, and the ex officio Community Relations Office member so you may rehearse your revised talk before it is presented before the Laboratory.

F. INTRODUCTION: At each lecture, the speaker is introduced, usually by the Department Chair or Division Head. So, please ask them to do this honor for you; but, if they are not available the day of your lecture, then please ask them to designate another appropriate person. Please send the name of the person who will do the introduction to the BLC chair as soon as possible.

G. PRESENTATION ITSELF: On the day of the lecture, please arrive at Berkner Hall by 3:45 p.m. at the latest, so that you may check the equipment setup. Although a desktop computer is available, most speakers prefer to bring their own laptop to ensure that the screen resolution is correct and that animations work properly. In addition, a microphone, overhead projector and laser pointer are provided. If you have a Mac and may need an adaptor to use the projector, then please remember to bring it with you.

Your lecture begins promptly at 4 p.m., with the introduction by your Department Chair/Division Head or their designate (see F., above). After your 50-minute talk plus the 10-minute Q&A, wine and cheese will be served in the Berkner Hall lobby, where audience members will seek you out to ask more questions and offer their congratulations!

H. THANK-YOU MEAL: To express our appreciation for your efforts, the BLC invites you and your spouse or significant other as our guests at a local restaurant of your choice for a thank-you lunch or supper. In addition to BLC members, colleagues from your department/division and any other member of the Laboratory community are invited to join us.

You select the restaurant and whether the meal is a dinner that evening or a lunch the next day. Also, please ask someone on your support staff to serve as the contact and to make the reservations. Please make chose the restaurant and meal time and recruit a contact person by the time your Bulletin announcement is written, so that information can be included.

Your meal and that of your guest are paid for by BSA; the remainder of the restaurant bill is split among the diners.

I. WEB ARCHIVE: Your talk is recorded, so, afterwards, it is posted on our Web site. You may also request a DVD of your talk.

Also after your talk, please supply your BLC representative with the file containing your talk, so it, too, can be posted on the Web.

II. Presentation Guidelines

Every talk has a beginning, middle and end — but what is discussed where depends upon a lecture's purpose, the audience and the occasion. Given the Brookhaven Lecture Series' purpose, audience and occasion (see I. Purpose, above), the following lecture structure & content and presentation-slide suggestions are made because they have been proven by our most speakers to meet the goal of imparting an appreciation for a scientist's research to an audience that is not necessarily working in the same field of endeavor.

A. LECTURE STRUCTURE & CONTENT

1. PRELIMINARIES: Since you are addressing an audience containing experts in other areas of science as well as non-scientists, not everyone is familiar with your field of endeavor. So, the very first thing that you are advised to do is put up a talk *title slide* and introduce a *thesis statement*, telling the audience what you are going to tell them about your work and its significance.

Next, we suggest that you put up a slide with an *outline of your talk* and review it with the audience. In telling the audience what you are going to tell them, its members will form a cognitive picture of the structure of your lecture, which will enable them to follow your talk better. In addition, we advise that you put a *divider slides* between your beginning, middle and end sections, also to help your audience follow your talk.

2. BEGINNING: In the beginning section of your lecture, you are advised to present a general history and current-events overview of your field leading toward the challenge that you have undertaken. In presenting this background information, your audience will gain an awareness and understanding of the motivation for your work at Brookhaven Lab — and this talk.

From the beginning, we suggest that you avoid highly technical terms, jargon and acronyms, and that you define whatever terms you do use, since the words used in your field may mean something else altogether or nothing at all to members of your audience.

3. MIDDLE: The middle section of your talk is where you get to explain your work: the specific scientific problem that you and your collaborators are pursuing; the technical developments that you have made; the discoveries that you have uncovered; the opportunities of which you have taken advantage; the challenges that you have had to overcome; the facilities, instruments, equipment, or other resources that you employed at Brookhaven or elsewhere, etc.

Although it is important to acknowledge the contributions of your colleagues, it is equally important to acknowledge your own successes. In other words, since this is your lecture, the audience is interested in learning about your efforts and

achievements — so please don't be so modest that you lose yourself in a crowd of your collaborators!

4. END: In the final section of your lecture, you may briefly discuss where your work is headed in the future and, again, your motivation for going there.

For your conclusion, summarize your talk, telling the audience what you have told them and, again, why your work is significant within your department, at the Lab, and in the world of science. By your concluding slide, your audience will have gained a new or renewed appreciation of your work and its place within the Laboratory, of the support provided by your funding agency, and of you as a scientist.

5. Q&A: After your 50-minute lecture, you'll remain on the Berkner Hall stage to answer your audience's questions, moderated by the BLC chair. In asking questions, audience members are generally not critical, but inquisitive because, again, they came to your talk not to evaluate your work, but to understand it.

After the Q&A, you are free to relax and join everyone in the lobby for conversation and refreshments!

B. PRESENTATION SLIDES

1. SLIDE QUANTITY: Each Brookhaven Lecture is approximately 50 minutes long. So, the absolute maximum number of slides is 50 — but only if you spend one minute addressing each slide. However, by layering slides with animations or fully explaining some slides, most speakers spend more than one minute per slide. The pace of each talk is different, but a good goal is 25 or 30 slides to allow an average of closer to two minutes per slide.

As demonstrated through successful lectures of past series, less is more. In other words, don't overdo the number of slides and/or the layers of animations, hoping that, by rushing through each slide, your talk will not exceed 50 minutes.

Instead, make several simpler slides out of complicated ones, and limit the amount of very specific technical detail into which you delve by keeping your presentation mostly at the big-picture science and facility/experiment level.

2. SLIDE QUALITY

a. TEXT

- use large-size type, e.g., 30 point type (Note: there are 72 points per inch.)
- use one or two simple, non-ornate fonts
- limit the number of fonts used
- be consistent in your use of fonts and type size
- write short, concise bullet points that summarize your talking points
- limit the amount of text on each slide

b. GRAPHICS

- use graphs and charts instead of text whenever possible
- label your axes simply
- eliminate parts of your graphs and charts not under discussion
- use photos of your experiment, facilities, etc.
- use photos of your colleagues and support staff, etc.

c. SLIDE LAYOUT & DESIGN

- use color combinations that are discernable, such as:
  - yellow or white type on black or blue background
  - black or blue type on white background
- be aware that people with the two major types of color blindness have difficulty distinguishing between red and green or between blue and yellow, so choose your colors accordingly
- use a consistent color scheme throughout the presentation
- use a consistent layout scheme throughout the presentation