

Suggestions for Face-to-Face Conferencing Success

Graduate/Undergraduate Student Experience:

- Advisors: clearly communicate with your students in advance of the conference how you plan to engage at the conference. Should students expect to travel around the conference with you at all times? Do you plan to meet up at specific points?
- Students: Make sure you and your advisor are on the same page about how you'll engage in the conference. Your advisor will likely introduce you to colleagues at the conference, but it will be important for you to network with others, either on your own or with other students.
- If you are very specifically looking to pursue further study at a specific institution, or are on the job market, conferences can be a great way to meet people and learn more about the prospective school.

Attire:

- Every profession handles conferences differently. At AAAE conferences, you'll see a variety of attire. Most attendees wear some combination of the following: blazer, slacks/skirt/khakis, knee-length or longer skirt, button-up shirt, tie, polo, or blouse. You'll be provided a conference name tag, but some people will bring their name tag from their institution.
- Consider the activities of the day. If you are going on an industry tour, you'll want to wear shoes and clothing/outerwear appropriate for the location.
- Every year there is a "University Logo Day"; this year it is on Tuesday, May 16. Typically, people wear a polo or some other kind of attire which has their institution's name/logo/mascot on it. Alternatively, some people won't wear clothing with the logo but might wear the school's colors. Of the 4 days of the conference, this one tends to be the most relaxed in terms of attire.
- Depending on what your travel companions' evening plans are, you may want to bring a change of clothes at the end of the day for your dinner plans.

Paper Presentations:

- Have a copy of your presentation on a flash drive in case the internet at the facility is not working.
- Practice your presentation in advance to ensure your technology works.

Poster Presentations:

- If you're attending a poster session but not presenting and aren't sure of how to strike up a conversation with a presenter, you might say, "Hi! Could you tell me about your poster?"
- If you're the poster presenter, be prepared to give a 30-second overview of the poster. If the people listening to you appear to want to hear more, be ready to give a 5-minute overview of your poster topic. Be prepared for back and forth of questions, much like a conversation.

Networking:

- Bring business cards with you or a digital business card.
- When eating meals at the conference, intentionally sit with people who you don't yet know, and introduce yourself. Great conversation often develops over a meal!
- Don't be afraid to step out of a session to continue a conversation with a new colleague.

Overall:

- Our colleagues have worked really hard to put together a quality learning experience for all attendees. Please make sure to share your appreciation with those folks, and keep your suggestions for improvement constructive and critically kind. There will be an opportunity to share feedback on your conference experience via the post-conference survey that will be emailed out after the conference.
- Bring your curiosity and desire to learn. Conferencing presents opportunities for us to learn from each other, and support new colleagues in their research and teaching endeavors.
- Have fun! 😊

Suggestions compiled by Dr. Sarah LaRose with the input of the AAAE National Professional Development Committee and National AAAE Board, May 2022; Updated April 2023.