

## The Poster Presentation as an Educational Tool

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The practice of professional nursing requires skill in a variety of domains. Although much of nursing education is focused on development of skills in the practice domain, educators profess to have an equal commitment to development of students in the scholarly role. Unfortunately, there has been a tendency to narrowly define scholarship in terms of skill in designing and conducting research studies. However, in a practice-oriented profession such as nursing, equally important as knowledge generation is skill in effectively communicating ideas and information, particularly as they relate to the practice of nursing.

Nursing faculty members constantly are looking for new ways to assist students in developing in the professional role. This article describes how the faculty of a baccalaureate nursing program in the south used the poster presentation as a method for developing student skill in effectively communicating information about innovations in nursing practice. The project was initially implemented during the 1994-1995 academic year.

The poster presentation has long been used as a method for presenting ideas on research, education, and practice.<sup>1</sup> One of the major advantages of poster presentations over other methods of information dissemination is the opportunity for networking.<sup>1</sup> The poster presentation allows the student to receive feedback from a variety of sources, including peers, faculty members, and other professionals. It also provides students the opportunity to teach and learn from each other. In addition, the poster is a vehicle for fostering the development of professional skills in

communication of ideas and in planning presentations for audiences. The poster presentation allows students to gain skill in written, visual, and verbal presentation, and in communicating ideas rapidly and efficiently.<sup>2</sup>

Poster exhibits need not be limited to research or clinical projects. The poster presentation can be used effectively by students in different levels and in various types of programs to present concepts and issues of interest to nursing. For example, posters can be used to present case studies focusing on particular clinical issues.

### Development

The poster presentation was implemented as one phase of a major senior project assignment focused on innovations in practice. The project, conceived as a method to support creativity and the development of skills in community program planning, was planned, implemented, and evaluated in conjunction with research and clinical nursing courses throughout the senior year of the baccalaureate nursing program. Student performance on the project was evaluated in two phases. First, stu-

*The authors describe their experiences in using the poster presentation to develop undergraduate nursing students in the scholarly role of professional nursing practice. The posters were used as a means for students to communicate their accomplishments in implementation and evaluation of an innovative clinical project. Methods for development, exhibition, and evaluation of the poster project are described.*

dents were evaluated on the quality of the written proposal describing the project and methods to be used. The second phase involved evaluation of student performance in implementing and evaluating the project.

The idea for a poster presentation emerged as faculty members considered how best to evaluate the project during the second phase. As students informally shared their excitement about their projects in classroom and clinical settings, faculty members realized that the students needed an opportunity to share information about their projects and their accomplishments with others. Faculty members wanted to develop an assignment for the implementation and evaluation phase that would demonstrate the scholarship inherent in the students' projects and that would promote development of skill in communication of their ideas and accomplishments. As the faculty considered these issues, the idea of the poster presentation was born.

Faculty members viewed the poster presentation as having a number of advantages over a written assignment. First, students would gain skill in communicating their ideas in a concise and efficient manner while

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having the opportunity to learn to use visual aids. Second, students would become more familiar with computer technologies as they developed a visual presentation. Finally, the poster presentation would allow students to receive feedback about their accomplishments from a variety of sources, not just from the faculty. The faculty members viewed such feedback as useful for emphasizing to the students that their projects had value beyond meeting the requirements of an academic exercise and hopefully would instill an enthusiasm for creativity and scholarship in nursing practice. The students also would be able to experience firsthand the positive aspects of networking with others with similar interests.

Faculty members developed guidelines and resources for implementing the poster assignment and for evaluation of the poster presentation. Each is described in the following sections.

### Guidelines for Developing the Poster

Students were instructed to develop a professional-quality poster that described, in detail, the implementation of their senior project. Critical components required in the poster were identified through a review of relevant literature.<sup>4</sup> Students were given a written description of the requirements for the project, which included: 1) title and name(s) of the student(s) involved; 2) purpose of the project; 3) population that was the focus of the project and how the population was accessed; 4) setting where the project was implemented; 5) methods used to implement the project; and 6) outcomes.

### Resources for Development of the Poster Display

The staff members of the media center and faculty developed a classroom presentation on how to design and construct a poster (Fig. 1). Students were shown basic supplies needed, such as poster boards, and where these could be purchased. The media staff also displayed posters to demonstrate how the students could use colored paper and visual materi-

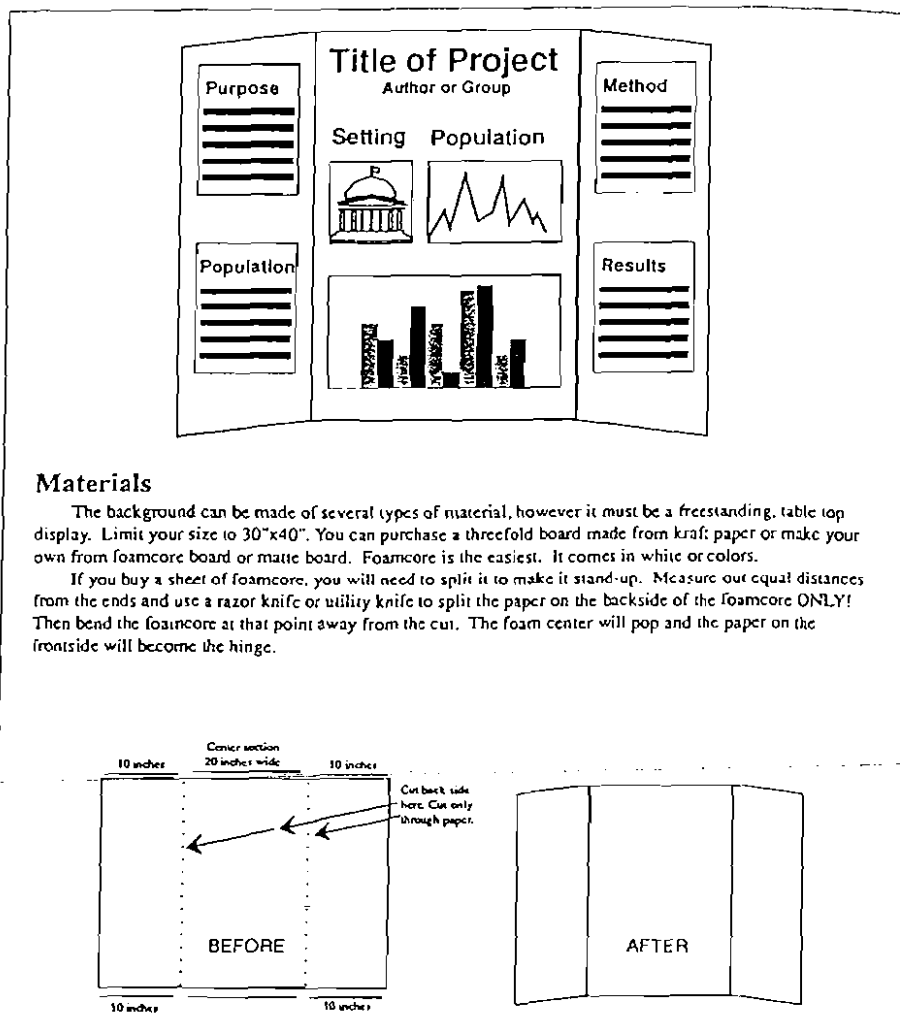


Figure 1. Example of handout on poster construction.

als such as photographs and graphics to enhance visual appeal. Students were provided with information on how to obtain written permission for use of pictures and copyrighted material. They also were instructed on how they could use computer programs and various fonts to design and print the written elements of the project. The week before the posters were to be exhibited, both the media center and computer laboratory staff were available to assist students in designing and printing their written content and in actual construction of the poster.

### The Poster Exhibit

Posters were displayed during a regularly scheduled class day. Faculty, staff, and students of the school of nursing were invited to view the posters. Students were required to be

available for a 2-hour period to answer viewers' questions and share information about their poster project.

Posters were evaluated by teams of three faculty members each. Each faculty member independently reviewed and evaluated posters assigned to his/her team. Evaluations were completed using a format based on 10 criteria developed by Bushy (Fig. 2).<sup>5</sup> The scores of the three reviewers were averaged for a final score.

### Outcomes

Several major outcomes were evident. The posters facilitated students in expression of their creativity. Students added their own personal touches through the use of color and art work, photographs, and tape-recorded music and messages. The quality compared favorably with posters

Identifying information	
1. Student Name(s)	
2. Project Name:	
3. Reviewer Name	
Directions for Rating Poster Presentation: Rate the poster presentation by indication on a scale of 1-5 (1=poor; 5=excellent) the extent to which the poster presentation meets each of the following criteria.	
<b>Overall Appearance:</b>	
1. The display attracts viewer's attention.	1 2 3 4 5
2. Script is easy to read.	1 2 3 4 5
3. Creative use of visual aids to enhance presentation.	1 2 3 4 5
4. Color used to enhance visual appeal.	1 2 3 4 5
<b>Content:</b>	
5. The content presented is clear and easy to understand.	1 2 3 4 5
6. The purpose of the project is clearly stated.	1 2 3 4 5
7. Population and setting are clearly described.	1 2 3 4 5
8. Project methods are clearly and concisely described.	1 2 3 4 5
9. Display is free of unnecessary detail.	1 2 3 4 5
<b>Presentation:</b>	
10. Student's responses to viewers' questions demonstrated knowledge of subject matter and project.	1 2 3 4 5
Total score _____	

Figure 2. Criteria for evaluation of poster presentation. Modified from Bushy A.<sup>5</sup> Copyright © 1990 Aspen Publishers, Inc., and used with permission.

that faculty members had observed displayed at professional conferences. Through completion of the project, students learned that it is more difficult to communicate ideas in the concise manner required by posters than it is to write a paper. They learned how to identify the main points and present them in a

manner that is easily and quickly understood. A major advantage of the project was that it allowed students to receive recognition for their efforts from a variety of sources beyond the classroom. Students were provided opportunities to display their posters at local nursing research and community health conferences, and at a

graduation reception. These opportunities allowed the faculty members and students to demonstrate the scholarship of undergraduate nursing students, as well as the creativity inherent in nursing practice.

## Summary

The poster presentation was found to be a useful tool for assisting students develop in the professional role. The project provided students the opportunity to gain skill in effectively communicating practice relevant information to other professionals and to experience firsthand the benefits of networking. The project also provided an opportunity to demonstrate the capabilities for scholarship inherent in both nursing practice and undergraduate education.

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