

2026 Research Symposium



THE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

The Research Symposium is a university-wide showcase of students' scholarship, research, and creative expression. Projects may be completed or in progress.

This annual event, held each spring, is open to visitors from the campus community and the public.

Entries may be individual or group. Each participant will present a poster throughout the Symposium unless their individual discipline offers an alternate presentation format.

Posters will be grouped by discipline.

The University Research Symposium *Bone Student Center* **April 10, 2026**

Morning Session
9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Afternoon Session
1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE?

The Symposium is open to all students currently enrolled at the university and engaged in scholarship, research, and creative expression under the direction of a faculty mentor.



HOW TO REGISTER

YOU MUST HAVE:

- Faculty mentor approval
- Met IRB/IACUC/IBC requirements, if applicable to your research
- An abstract approved by your faculty mentor (see page 7 - *Abstract*)
- Groups must have chosen a primary group member who will register the entire group (See page 6 - *Group Requirements* for further information)

TO REGISTER AS A PART OF A CLASS:

- Consult with your faculty mentor regarding which session to register for
- Provide full and accurate class information

TO CONFIRM REGISTRATION:

- Email confirmation will be sent to registrant immediately after the online registration is submitted.
- Registration is not complete until it has been approved by your faculty mentor.

Check the confirmation list posted on the Symposium website beginning on January 16th.



IMPORTANT DATES

Registration Opens
Online confirmation List (Updated Weekly)
Registration Closes

December 1, 2025
January 16, 2026
February 13, 2026

POSTER VS. ALTERNATIVE FORMATS

POSTERS:

Your poster tells the story of your scholarship, research, or creative expression. It tells the Symposium guests what you did, why you did it, and what you discovered. Posters will be displayed in two sessions:

- The **morning** session will be held from 9 a.m. until 11 a.m.
- The **afternoon** session will be held from 1 p.m. until 3 p.m.

Both sessions will be held at the Bone Student Center.

During your session, you must be available next to your poster to explain your work and answer any questions about the work to faculty, students, or visitors as they view the posters.

ALTERNATE FORMATS:

Participants may have the opportunity to present at oral events to be held in conjunction with the University Research Symposium. These events will be held on either the Friday of or Saturday after the Symposium. Each participant should consult with their department or faculty mentor to see if their discipline is holding such an event. If their department is not planning to host an oral event, the participant is required to present a poster at Bone Student Center.



ALTERNATIVE EVENTS

Some disciplines may host their own oral events. Please contact your faculty mentor regarding such an event taking place in your department.

POSTER REQUIREMENTS

ALL POSTERS must include the following information at the *top* of their poster:

- Abstract Title
- Name of Student Presenter(s) and pronouns
- Education Level of Presenter(s)
- Faculty Mentor and pronouns
- Mentor's Department/School

All posters should be well organized, clear and accurate.

A copy of the abstract must also be included within or attached to the poster.

RESEARCH-ORIENTED POSTERS should include the following information:

- Introduction (hypothesis, reasoning, etc.)
- Objectives (significance of research to the field)
- Method (research parameters, design, etc.)
- Results (full, partial, or expected achieved from research)
- Conclusion (analysis of full, partial, or expected results)

CREATIVE POSTERS should include the following information:

- Introduction (how/why did you choose the topic)
- Objective (what did you hope to achieve)
- Process (how did you create or develop your work, what methods did you use)
- Results (did the work turn out as you planned, why or why not)

GROUP POSTERS have additional guidelines:

- See page 6 - *Group Requirements*.

DIMENSIONS AND MOUNTING:

It is strongly suggested that participants print their poster at 48" x 36" with the Center for Integrated Professional Development, as a 48" x 36" mat board will be provided day of Symposium. Students with posters larger or smaller than 48" x 36" will need to provide their own mat board.

48" x 36" mat boards and thumb tacks or clips will be provided day of Symposium. These mat boards are not to be altered and are to be left on the easel at the end of each session.

IMPORTANT

Space is limited—poster and display board dimensions may not exceed 40"x 60".

If your abstract contains **superscript, subscript, italics, symbols, or Greek/Latin characters**, you will need to email a word document of your abstract to symposium@ilstu.edu, as well as, copying and pasting into the provided field.

E-POSTER ALTERNATIVE

As an alternative to in person events there will be a station(s) available for the viewing of E-Posters. To submit an E-Poster the following guidelines must be met:

Register for the e-poster option.

POSTER:

To submit a digital version of your poster you must submit one of the following file types:

- Powerpoint (.pptx)
- Adobe PDF (.pdf)

The file name must be named: "LastName_First Initial_Title_Poster"

SLIDESHOW PRESENTATION:

As an alternative to the traditional poster you may submit a slideshow presentation. The following guidelines must be met:

SLIDE LAYOUT:

- Title with author affiliations and email addresses (1 slide)
- Please also include contact information so attendees can get in touch with you while on-site at the Symposium (i.e., Twitter, text, etc).
- Background and Introduction (1 slide)
- Materials and Methods (1 slide)
- Results with images (up to 4 slides)
- Conclusions (1 slide)

FILE TYPES:

- Powerpoint (.pptx)
- Adobe PDF (.pdf)

The file name must be named: "LastName_First Initial_Title_Slideshow"

SUBMISSION:

To submit your E-Poster, email the poster with the above file name to symposium@IllinoisState.edu

Please note that you will NOT need to sign up for a session. Your poster will be available all day. While you will not need to be available all day to answer questions you must have a way to be contacted for questions available on your poster.

All E-Posters will be due no later
than March 27, 2026

GROUP REQUIREMENTS

One designated group member (group leader) will be responsible for registering the **ENTIRE GROUP** for the Symposium.

GROUPS:

More than one person collaborating and presenting research is a group. Groups work together throughout the research process, prepare one poster, and present their project.

GROUP LEADERS:

Groups must designate a "group leader." The group leader is responsible for registering the group and will be the main contact for the group. When registering, the group leader will submit the title, abstract, group information, and compliance requirements.

POSTER:

Each group member must prepare part of the poster. Each member of the group should incorporate into their section of the poster the area to which they most contributed. Each member should be named along with their contribution on the poster or on a paper attached to the poster.

GROUP INFORMATION:

To register a group, the group leader will need the following:

EACH GROUP MEMBER'S

- Full name and pronouns
- Email Address
- Department/School
- Education Level
 - (i.e. Undergraduate Freshman, Graduate Student)

EACH FACULTY MENTOR'S

- Full name and pronouns
- Email Address
- Department/School

THE FACULTY MENTOR MUST APPROVE

- Online Registration
- Abstract

The group leader registers the ENTIRE GROUP.

Groups with 5 + participants may REQUEST an additional easel if necessary.

ABSTRACT

An abstract is a brief summary of your work. The abstract must be no longer than 400 words, single spaced. Double space between paragraphs, but do not indent.

You will be asked to include a copy of your abstract in your online registration form. A copy of your abstract must also be included in your poster display—either within or attached to your poster. This will allow viewers to quickly understand your project.

A good abstract is:

- **Accurate:** Ensure that the abstract correctly reflects the purpose and content of your presentation. Do not include any additional information that does not appear in the body of your presentation.
- **Self-contained:** Define all abbreviations and acronyms. Spell out names of tests, drugs, etc. Define unique terms. Paraphrase rather than quote.
- **Concise & Specific:** Make it maximally informative; especially the lead sentence. Be as brief as possible.
- **Coherent & Readable:** Write in clear and vigorous prose. Use an active voice, rather than a passive voice. Use the present tense to describe results continuing applicability.

Your abstract MUST be proofread and approved by your faculty mentor BEFORE registration.

RESEARCH COMPLIANCE

Illinois State University is committed to promoting the responsible conduct of research on our campus. Responsible research involves more than just sound science. It involves the awareness and practice of ethical principles, and adherence to regulations developed to protect research subjects. In addition to general policies pertaining to research integrity, ISU has established specific policies pertaining to the use of **human subjects, live vertebrate animals, and bio hazardous materials**, which are overseen by:

- the Institutional Review Board (IRB)
- the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)
- the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC)

Projects involving one of these policies may require approval of the appropriate committee prior to initiating any data collection. For information on whether your project may be subject to these policies, please consult your faculty mentor or visit the Research Ethics and Compliance website <http://Research.IllinoisState.edu/Ethics/>.

DAY OF THE SYMPOSIUM

Morning Check-in

Set-up posters:

8:15 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.

Open to the public:

9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Afternoon Check-in

Set-up posters:

12:15 p.m. - 12:45 p.m.

Open to the public:

1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

48" x 36" mat boards and binder clips will be provided day of Symposium. These mat boards are not to be altered and are to be left on the easel at the end of each session. If your poster is larger or smaller than 48" x 36" you must provide your own mat board.

Any participants or group members that do not check in and receive a name tag will **NOT** be eligible for travel reimbursement funds.

DAY OF THE SYMPOSIUM

OPEN TO PUBLIC:

The campus-wide community has been invited to attend the Symposium. They may browse the posters on display and listen to oral presentations. Be sure to invite your family, friends and classmates. All attendees to the Symposium are welcome to provide feedback to the participants.

FEEDBACK:

Presenters are welcome to leave their posters for up to 20 minutes during their session to review the posters of peers and provide oral feedback at that time.

DRESS CODE:

This is a professional university event. Presenters should have a clean look, and be dressed in business or business casual attire.

REFRESHMENTS:

Presenters and guests may enjoy free refreshments, courtesy of ISU catering, during the Symposium.



CHECKLIST

- ☐ Read and follow the 2026 Guidelines.
- ☐ Contact your faculty mentor to ensure your project meets the IRB/IACUC/IBC requirements and begin preparing your work.
- ☐ Finalize your abstract (up to 400 words) and have your faculty mentor approve it along with the authorship listing order if you are including it.
- ☐ Register on-line between December 1, 2025 - February 13, 2026.
- ☐ Follow steps within the on-line registration to have your faculty mentor approve your registration.
- ☐ Check the Registration Confirmation List at studentresearch.illinoisstate.edu/opportunities/university-research/ beginning January 16, 2026 to be sure your mentor has approved your registration.
- ☐ Presenter(s) names will appear on the confirmation list after the faculty mentor has approved the on-line registration. The confirmation list will be updated weekly.
- ☐ Prepare your poster. An easel, a 48" x 36" mat board, and thumb tacks/binder clips will be provided at the Symposium. If your poster is larger or smaller than 48" x 36", participants must provide their own mat board.
- ☐ The day of the Symposium, learn from the experience. Have fun, talk to others, and polish your ability to present professional-level work.
- ☐ Consider presenting at a professional conference/exhibit.

An easel, a 48" x 36" mounting board, and binder clips will be provided at the Symposium. If your poster is larger or smaller than 48" x 36", participants must provide their own mat board.

Due to the limited space at the Bone Student Center, posters may be no larger than 40" x 60".

PRESENTATION TIPS

POSTERS:

A poster lets you summarize your scholarship, research, or creative expression in an engaging visual format. Space on a poster is limited, so pick what to present wisely. Your display should be self-explanatory and have a logical flow – viewers should be able to follow the order even if you are not present. Start with a rough draft of your design on paper, using graph paper or Post-it notes to simulate sections. Add photographs/graphics to make the poster visually appealing to the audience.

Check out this playlist for more information on creating posters:

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJbMBUFNkr-0iueMFiGaP6eGXkBvaB4rJ>

Keep The Following Questions In Mind While Designing Your Poster:

IS THE LAYOUT EASY TO FOLLOW?

Most people read from top to bottom, then left to right.

IS THE TEXT EASY TO READ?

Headings should be at least 36 point text and easily readable from at least 6 feet. All other text should be at least 18 point and legible from 4 feet. The contrast between text color and the background should be strong (i.e. black text on a white background).

IS THE POSTER CLUTTERED BY TOO MANY FONTS?

Do not use more than two typefaces. Instead use bold, italics, and size to set type differently. Times New Roman, Arial, Garamond and Verdana are suggested typefaces.

ARE THE COLORS DISTRACTING?

Stick to a simple color scheme.

ARE THE GRAPHICS CLEAR AND EASY TO UNDERSTAND?

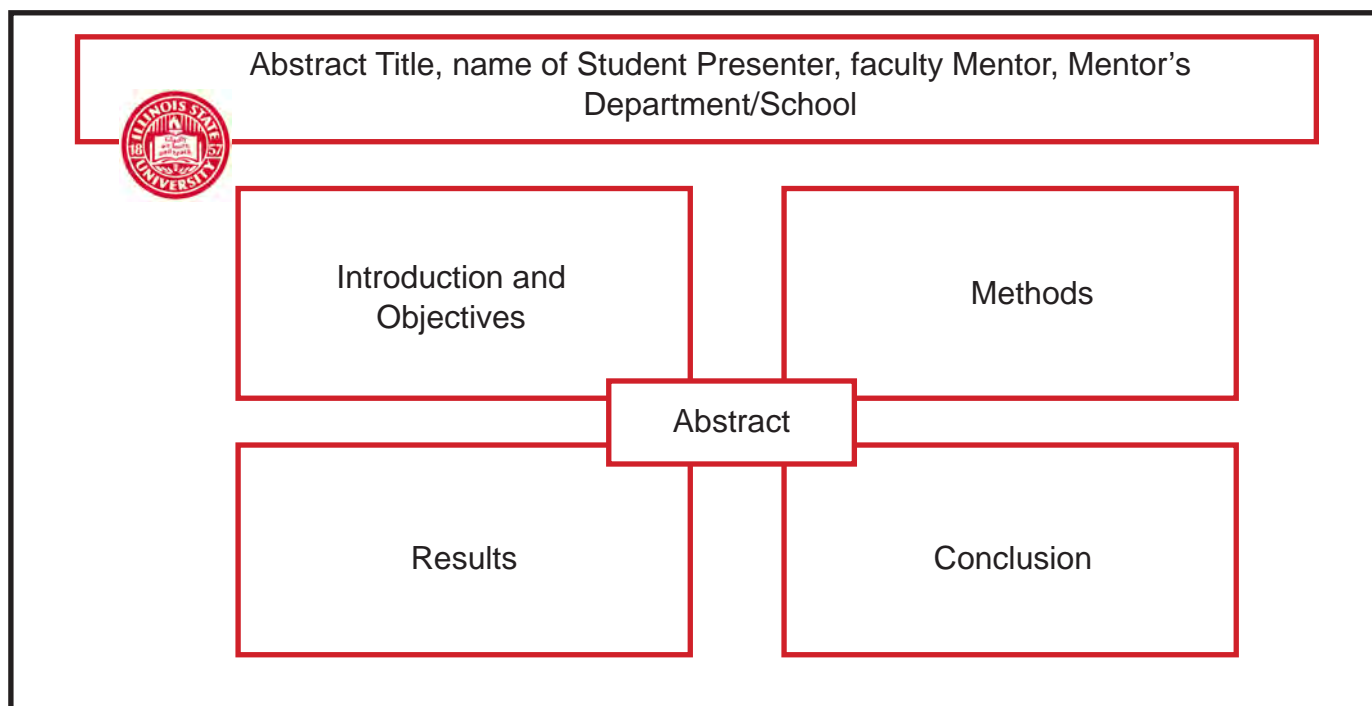
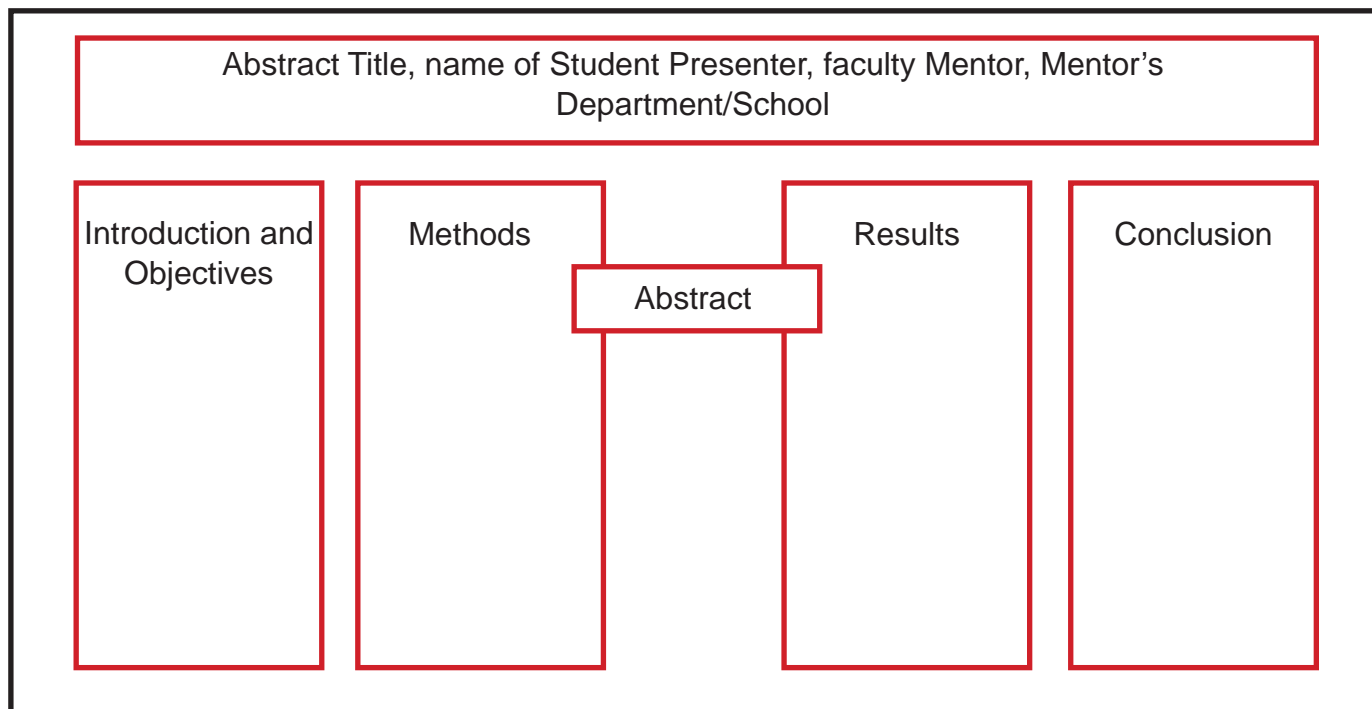
Avoid elements that do not add useful information. Explanations should be within or next to figures, not referenced from elsewhere.

CAN YOU TALK ABOUT YOUR POSTER WITHOUT READING DIRECTLY FROM IT?

Be ready to discuss details that visitors cannot just read for themselves. People are interested in additional information about your work.

COMMON RESEARCH POSTER LAYOUTS

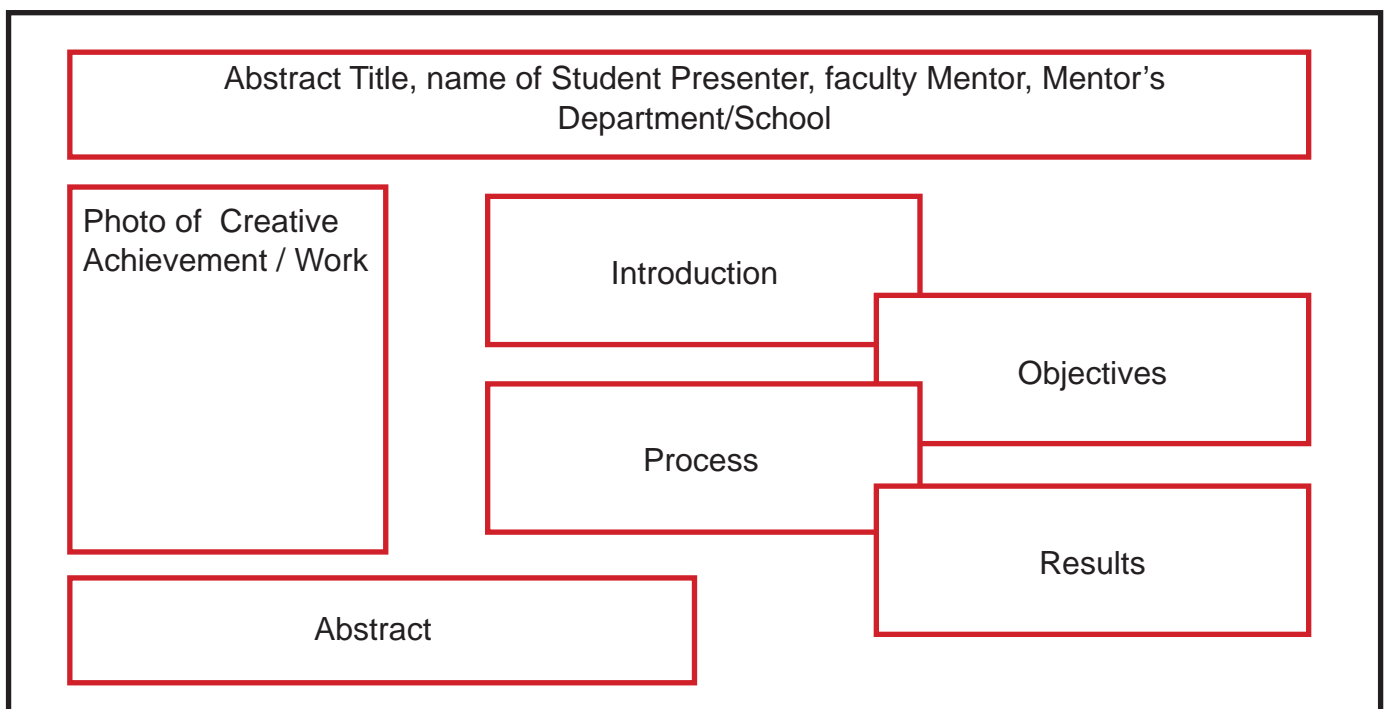
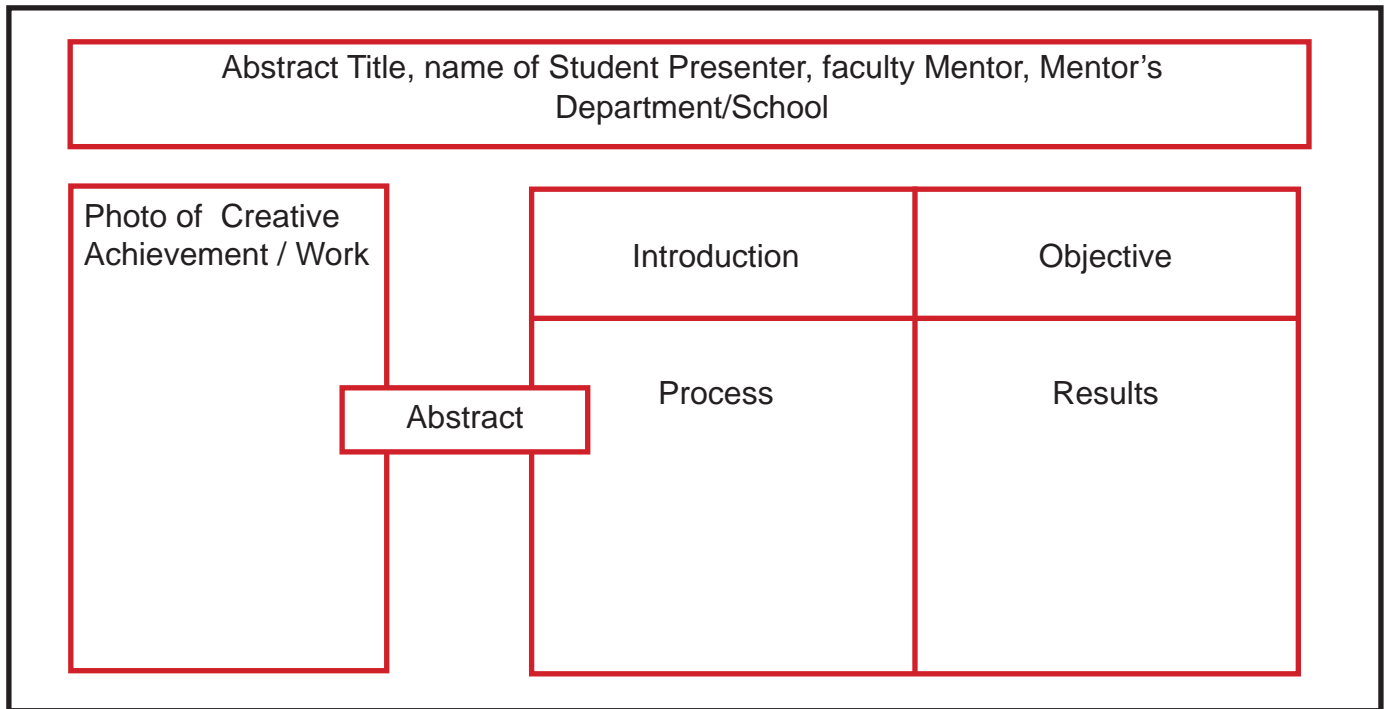
Below are two possible layouts for research-oriented posters.



In a research poster, you must address the **objective** of the study, your **hypothesis**, methods used, your **results**, and your **conclusion**.

CREATIVE POSTER LAYOUTS

Below are two possible layouts for creative posters. Remember to include how or why you chose the topic, the objective, the process you used, and the final results.



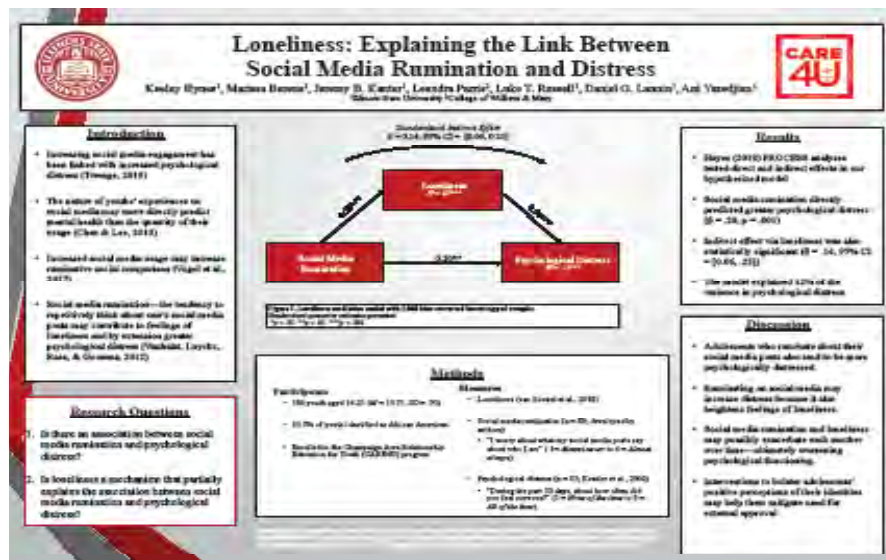
POSTER PRINTING OPTIONS

University Research Symposium posters should be professionally printed. Students are responsible for the cost of their poster printing. Check with your faculty mentor and your school/department to ask if they have funds to provide poster printing.

Student may apply to be reimbursed for the cost of their Symposium poster through the Symposium Poster Printing Assistance Grant (while funds are available). Grant information and application portal available in January 2026.

ON-CAMPUS PRINTING:

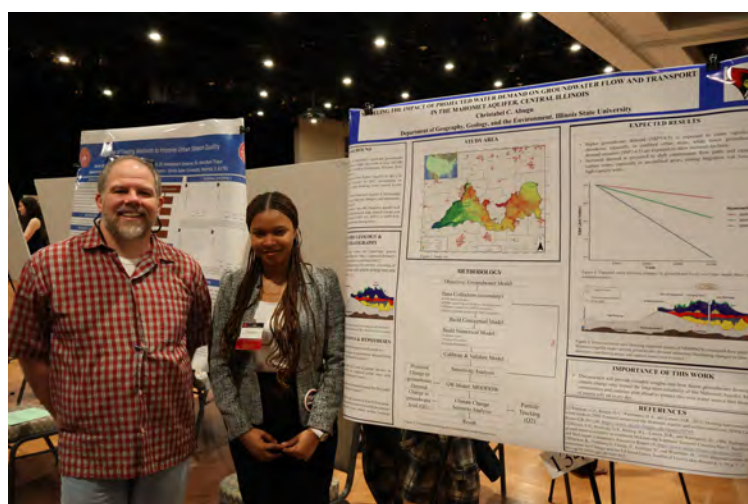
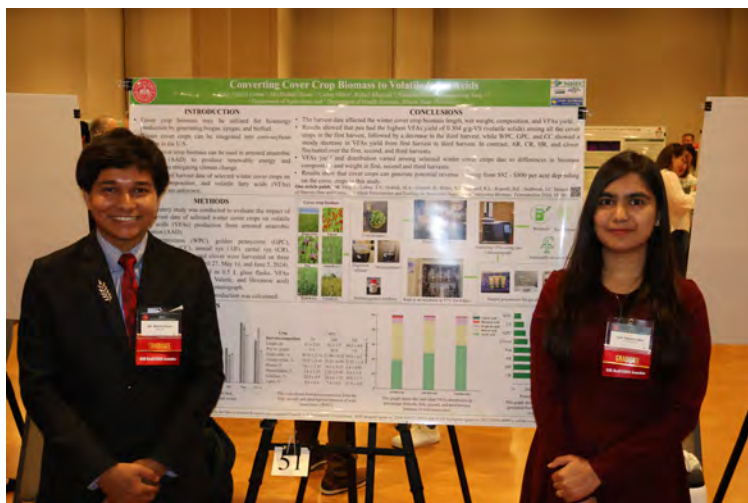
Poster production is available through the Center for Integrated Professional Development (CIPD). See the Center's [website](#) for accepted file types, instructions, and pricing. Students are strongly encouraged to submit their posters at least two weeks before the Symposium for printing. **Posters must be submitted by March 27, 2026**, to ensure adequate lead time for production. The Center cannot guarantee that posters will be ready with less lead time. Students will be notified by email when they can pick up finished posters in Williams Hall.



MAT BOARD:

A 48" x 36" mat board will be provided the day of the symposium. Provided mat boards must be unaltered and left on the easel at the end of the session.

PREVIOUS SYMPOSIUM POSTERS



ALTERNATE EVENTS TIPS

Although each department will have its own requirements (consult with your faculty mentor for details), the following tips apply to most oral presentations.

ORGANIZE YOUR THOUGHTS

Start with an outline and develop good transitions between sections. You need to be able to convey all the key information. It is a good idea to have a written version of your oral presentation. As a guideline, two pages double spaced takes about five minutes to read.

- Imagine this as a news story about your project. It may help to capture the right tone to communicate orally with the public.

HAVE A STRONG OPENING

Why should the audience listen to you?

DEFINE TERMS EARLY

If you are using terms that may be new to the audience, introduce them early in your presentation. Once an audience gets lost in unfamiliar terminology, it is extremely difficult to get them back on track.

TIME YOURSELF

Do not wait until the last minute to time your presentation. You probably only have a certain amount of time to speak, so you want to know, as soon as possible, if you are close to that limit.

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

The more you practice a presentation, the more comfortable you will be in front of an audience. Practice in front of a friend or two and ask for their feedback. Record yourself and listen to it critically. Make it better and do it again.



ALTERNATE EVENTS TIPS

RESEARCH BASED ORAL PRESENTATIONS

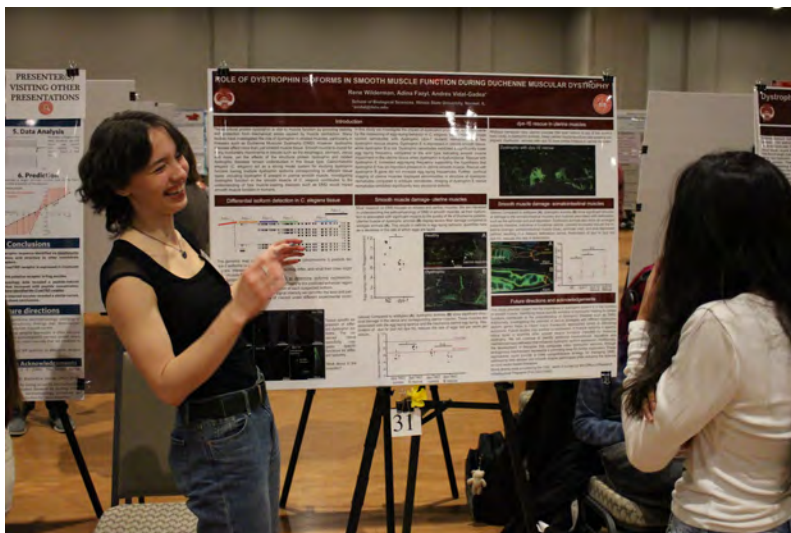
Typically include:

- Identification (title, your name, education level, faculty mentor)
- Introduction (hypothesis, reasoning, etc.)
- Method
- Results (partial or full)
- Conclusion

SCHOLARSHIP/CREATIVE ENDEAVOR BASED ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Typically include:

- Identifications (Title, Your Name, Education Level, Faculty Mentor)
- Introductions (How/Why you chose the topic?)
- Objective (What did you hope to achieve? What inspired you? What did you want to have as a final work?)
- Process (How did you create or develop your work? What methods did you use?)
- Results (Did the work turn out as you planned, why or why not?)



IN ABSENTIA

TO OBTAIN IN ABSENTIA STATUS:

- Read the information below to see if your circumstances qualify.
- Speak to your faculty mentor for approval.
- Ask your faculty mentor to email an In Absentia request on your behalf to Symposium@ilstu.edu no later than February 13, 2026.

IN ABSENTIA GUIDELINES:

- Registration in the Symposium assumes that the participant or group will be attending the Morning Session (9:00 am -11:00 am) or Afternoon Session (1:00 pm - 3:00 pm) for the entirety of the session. Alternate arrangements must be made by the participant's faculty mentor.
- Many faculty members will approve attendance at the Symposium even if it conflicts with their class time. Participants who have a class that meets during their session should request permission from their professor to be absent from class.
- To accommodate a student who is unable to be present due to a conflicting academic obligation, the faculty mentor may request permission for a student to present In Absentia by February 13, 2026.
- Requests for In Absentia that are completed after February 13, 2026 will be considered on a case by case basis by the Office of Student Research.
- A student who is approved for an In Absentia presentation must follow all other guidelines for participants, but will not be present during the poster display. The student must arrange for a representative to set up and remove the poster during the time specified in the Symposium Guidelines.
 - If the representative is late or absent, Symposium staff will not be available to set up, remove, or store posters.
 - Students whose posters are not set up by the start of the Symposium will not be counted as participants, and posters not removed at the end of the Symposium will be discarded.
- If you are approved for In Absentia due to a class, you are still expected to attend the Symposium with your poster before and after your class time.
- Participants who do not have In Absentia approval and do not appear for their poster presentation will be considered not to have participated in the Symposium, and will not be eligible for travel reimbursement funds.

THE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM IS SPONSORED BY:



Good Luck

For additional information contact the Office of Student Research:
(309) 438-0787 (8-OSTR)

Symposium@IllinoisState.edu

studentresearch.illinoisstate.edu/opportunities/university-research/

*If you need special accommodations to fully participate in this event,
please contact the Office of Student Research.
Please allow sufficient time to arrange the accommodation.*



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