

# A guide to planning a research conference

The Department of Medicine's Office of Faculty Development and Research has created this "how to" guide to share our collective knowledge and learned experiences on hosting an annual research conference.

Throughout this guide, you will see select **highlighted** terms, this indicates when supplemental materials or examples, such as email templates, award proofs, judging forms, etc. are available upon request. If you are interested in any of these items, please email [DOMResearch@emory.edu](mailto:DOMResearch@emory.edu).

## 1. History – Purpose

- a. The annual Emory University Department of Medicine Research Day celebrates research efforts across the department. The event brings together researchers from all divisions and provides an opportunity to share exciting new findings, facilitate scientific exchange, and identify potential new collaborations.
- b. The inaugural Department of Medicine Research Day took place on June 19, 2008. The initial purpose of this research conference was to highlight the research of early career faculty members. Limiting this event to DOM faculty only lasted two years before the event was opened to include post-doctoral fellows and students. Today, we accept abstract submissions from all DOM faculty, fellows, residents, and students (whose primary mentor is a member of the DOM).
- c. This annual event is composed of featured research talks by department faculty, selected oral presentations from the top-scored submitted abstracts, two poster sessions, a keynote talk, and an award ceremony. The Department Chair also delivers a presentation of research accomplishments over the last year. Posters and oral presentations are judged for a variety of awards. More details regarding each of these elements will be provided throughout this manual.
- d. **The virtual years**
  - i. In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the event was hosted virtually via a third-party platform and saw not only a record-breaking number of abstracts submitted (182) but also welcomed more than 350 attendees, the most in conference history.
  - ii. While an in-person option was planned in 2021, the ongoing pandemic forced organizers to keep the event virtual via Zoom.
    1. Although a few technical difficulties were experienced during both virtual conferences, overall, participation was high, the science was conveyed, and both conferences were ruled successes. The advantage of the virtual option is that it increases access for faculty and trainees who are not on the main campus.

## 2. Lessons Learned

- a. The first two DOM Research Day's only highlighted faculty research – which was too limited to highlight the breadth and depth of research in the department.
- b. Awards: The top poster score wins the overall award but then is not considered for sub-category awards.
- c. Poster Judges: have a group moderator (in virtual environments) be a backup judge for no-show poster judges; if possible, have 3 judges assigned to each poster in case one fails to show up
- d. Important to research and pilot the platform for virtual interface beforehand; important to have the admin team be ready for email messaging and plan B options if the virtual platform fails (that was huge!).
- e. Important to have the operations/admin team physically together for virtual offering as this allows for quicker response and easier communications b/t the team.
- f. Important to have the judge's cell phone numbers to follow up if they fail to turn in their scores before they leave. *See the Poster Judge section for more information.*

- g. Important to share the conference chair and vice chair's phone numbers as well as the entire support team.
- h. Have the keynote presentation just after lunch so attendees stay for the afternoon.
- i. Split poster sessions among oral sessions to maintain attendance.
- j. Make sure poster presenters understand they are expected to be present to present their posters.
- k. Copy mentors on communications to trainees.
- l. Include featured (selected) talks to ensure the high quality of the conference, rather than relying solely on abstracts.

### 3. Organizing Committee / People and Roles

- a. The **event organizing committee** is made up of the conference chair and vice chair, administrative lead, selected departmental leadership (i.e., Vice Chair of Research, Associate Vice Chair of Research), and administrative support team. In the past, the steering committee of the DOM Research Community served as the conference committee.
- b. Two faculty leads spearhead the annual DOM Research Day conference: a chair and vice chair. Each year a new conference vice chair is identified to work closely with the existing conference chair to help organize the event. This is a two-year commitment, in the second year, the conference vice chair moves into the role of conference chair. This allows the conference vice chair to learn the ropes before taking over.
  - 1. The **conference chair's** responsibilities include helping to select and invite featured research speakers and poster judges. The conference chair will also work with the conference vice chair to assign abstract reviewers, moderators, and poster judges, group posters thematically, review event communications, introduce speakers during the event, help with set up and break down (if held in-person), and assist with overall event facilitation.
    - a. The organizing committee presents the outgoing conference chair with a plaque (**proof**) at the end of the event to commemorate their hard work and leadership for the last two years.
  - 2. The **conference vice chair's** responsibilities include inviting abstract reviewers, moderators, and poster judges, grouping posters thematically, reviewing event communications, helping with set up and break down (if held in-person), and assisting with overall event facilitation. This position is offered first to members of the DOM Strategic Advisory for Research Team (StART) before opening the call to the whole department.
- c. **Conference administrative lead** (my role): There needs to be an identified administrative lead for any event. This person is the engine for the whole event, all discussions, decisions, and outcomes cannot happen without them. Generally, they will be the point of contact for all vendors, speakers, presenters, etc.)
- d. **Conference administrative support team**: Made up of the Office of Faculty Development and Research staff and well as the Department's communications team, is important to share the responsibilities and tasks with a trusted team for larger events. While tasks will be divided out amongst the team, remember, that all final decisions must go through the conference administrative lead.
  - i. Tasks that may be parsed out among the support team include keynote communications and travel arrangements, day-of poster judging monitoring, coordinating the booths, catering, etc.
- e. **Department Vice Chair of Research**: general oversight
- f. **Miscellaneous administrative help** (i.e., featured research talk moderators, oral presentation moderators, poster session moderators (if virtual), poster session admins (if virtual), concurrent session moderators and admins (if virtual), keynote moderator (usually conference chair), etc.
- g. **Department Chair**: Present welcome, research accomplishment slides, and closing remarks.

- h. **Process doc/task lists:** A detailed task list that entails who is responsible for each item, as well as the deadline for each item, is invaluable to conference organization.

#### 4. Keynote

- a. **History of Research Day keynote:** DOM Research Day keynotes have been senior scientists or Department Chairs from domestic institutions, a Director of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) at National Institutes of Health (NIH), a member of the AAMC, and Emory's very own Dean of the School of Medicine and have covered a variety of research areas from hematology/oncology, cardiology, pulmonary, renal medicine, general medicine, and immunology. The most successful keynote speakers not only present their science but also offer advice to trainees. They are also able to span basic and clinical research.
- b. **Selection process**
  - i. **Vote to determine**
    - 1. **Solicitation of possible keynotes:** Soon after the event in the fall, reach out to department leadership for potential keynotes. At Emory, this means Division Directors, the Department Chair, and the research advisory committee.
    - 2. **Voting:** Build a bio page (Word) of all recommended keynotes. This document should include their names, pictures, and a short bio of their research focus. Create a survey (Qualtrics) to allow for ease of voting tabulation by the same group of department leadership.
    - 3. **Chair approval:** Before the invitation is extended, it is important to gain approval from the Department Chair. It's a good idea to identify several backups in case the first choice is not available.
  - ii. **Internal candidate:** In times of financial hardship, we move to internal speakers to save money on travel expenses.
  - iii. **Invite (template):** The Department Vice Chair for Research should send the official invite to any potential keynote.
  - iv. Once the keynote is confirmed, their short bio, headshot, and talk title (if they know it) should be requested to be shared on the [event webpage](#) and included in email advertisements.
  - v. **Introduction:** If the person who originally nominated that year's keynote is available (or known), it is nice to invite them to introduce the keynote during the conference. If not, then ask the Department Chair or conference chair.
  - vi. **Day of schedule**
  - vii. **Finance:** Check with the department finance team about what is needed to process the honorarium, if applicable.
    - 1. Historically they need a completed SIF Form and W9
- c. **Honorarium or plaque:** A typical keynote honorarium is \$1,000 and includes a plaque commemorating their role. If for whatever reason they are unable to accept an honorarium, they are presented with a keepsake/sculpture instead.
- d. **Reservations**
  - i. **Hotels:** Close to campus, usually the Emory Conference Center
  - ii. **Flights:** The invitation letter indicates that we only cover domestic economy flights.
  - iii. **Ground transportation:** Schedule a private car for to and from airport transportation.
    - 1. For the keynote dinner: plan to have one of the attendees scoop the keynote from their hotel.
    - 2. Day of event: plan to have either the Department Chair or event leadership scoop the keynote from the hotel.
- e. **Dinner**

- i. The night before the conference a dinner is hosted in the keynote's honor with the conference chair and vice chair, up-and-coming investigators, and, potentially, members of department leadership.
- ii. Invites are sent to the selected individuals and CVs of attendees are sent to the keynote.
- iii. If the keynote is an internal speaker, the dinner is not organized.

## 5. Inviting Featured Research Speakers

- a. Four DOM faculty members are invited to present 15-minute Featured Research talks and one senior faculty member is invited to present a 30-minute Featured talk. These talks are usually offered to faculty members who were recent recipients of [departmental research awards](#); the *R. Wayne Alexander Excellence in Research Accomplishment Award* recognizes significant contributions to medical knowledge realized through a body of research over an individual's career in either basic or clinical/translational research, *Outstanding Scientific Citation Awards* recognize researchers producing outstanding basic and clinical/translational (including QI and health services) research publications for both junior and senior faculty.

## 6. Pre-Event Communications

- a. **Save the Date** (<https://createsend.com/t/j-981AF917B67D01B62540EF23F30FEDED>): The initial Save the Date goes out seven months before the event: \_\_\_\_\_ (middle of March) and serves as the announcement for the confirmed keynote speaker, date, and location of the conference.
- b. **Call for Abstracts** (<https://createsend.com/t/j-F2CCAA5C80115E612540EF23F30FEDED>): The initial Call for Abstracts goes out four months before the event: \_\_\_\_\_ (middle of July) with a deadline 2 months before the event: \_\_\_\_\_ (August).
  - i. Reminder emails (<https://createsend.com/t/j-FB8D69F920C562852540EF23F30FEDED>): Be prepared to send several abstract reminder emails with the final reminder going out about a week before the deadline. Warning: do not be discouraged with the abstracts don't immediately start pouring in following the initial call, most submissions may come in during the final week or even day.
  - ii. Final reminder abstract submission usually comes from the Department Chair to encourage last-minute abstract submissions. <https://createsend.com/t/j-F7E25CF235E45FEA2540EF23F30FEDED>
  - iii. Send the abstract tally to division directors about a week before the deadline to encourage submissions and build a sense of competition between the divisions.
- c. **Registration** (<https://createsend.com/t/j-2A2CA2A000BB7CAB2540EF23F30FEDED>): Registration opens shortly after the abstract deadline about 2 months before the event: \_\_\_\_\_ (around the end of August).
  - i. First reminder <https://createsend.com/t/j-D323850904E4B18A2540EF23F30FEDED>
  - ii. Final reminder <https://createsend.com/t/j-DD216362368413072540EF23F30FEDED>
- d. **Reminder to attend** (<https://createsend.com/t/j-EEBEA2B02B2E0F102540EF23F30FEDED>): sent the day before the in-person event

## 7. Registration

- a. The registration survey collects the following information: attendee name, email, division, role in the event, and photo consent.
- b. Ensure that all invited speakers, judges, etc. are registered

## 8. Abstract Collection and Submission Form

- a. As mentioned in the "History and Purpose" of the event, all DOM faculty, fellows, residents, and students (whose primary mentor is a member of the DOM) are invited to submit an abstract. There is a limit of 2 abstracts per presenting author.
- b. The abstract submission form collects the following information for each abstract; presenting author's first and last name, email, academic title, division, and if they wish their abstract to be

considered for an oral presentation or just a poster; title of abstract, complete list of authors, abstract text (limited to 250 words), presentation category (clinical/translational, basic science, or quality/health services), and senior author's name and email.

- i. In 2022, we added additional questions for self-identified race, ethnicity, and gender.
- c. Once the deadline has passed, clean up the list of submitted abstracts by removing any duplicates to determine abstract metrics.
  - i. [Advertise](#) submitted abstract metrics in department newsletters and on the [event webpage](#).

## 9. Abstract Review Process

### a. Abstract reviewer invites

- i. **When:** Abstract reviewers are invited about 3 weeks before the abstract deadline. Each abstract is assigned 2 reviewers and the scores are averaged. Typically, each reviewer will receive 23-30 abstracts to score.
  - ii. **Who:** Anywhere from 150 – 175 submitted abstracts are expected each year which means 12-14 reviewers are needed. The Research committee meets to discuss who should be invited to review and score abstracts. This role is a good opportunity to get early-career faculty involved and give them experience. We try to choose both basic and clinical reviewers and have representatives from multiple divisions and multiple faculty ranks.
- b. **NIH scoring rubric**
- c. When the reviewer assignments go out, the requested turnaround is within 2 weeks or 10 days.
  - d. The organizing committee/team meets soon after the reviewer deadline to determine which 12 presenters, based on their scores, to invite to present 15-minute oral presentations. To ensure that the conference is diverse, we consider each presenter's division, type of research (clinical/translational or basic).

## 10. Oral Presentations

- a. The presenters of top-scored submitted abstracts are invited to present 15-minute live oral presentations (10-minute talk, 5 minutes for questions) during the conference.
- b. **Oral presentation judging:** Oral and poster judging is done electronically via Google Forms, *see the Poster Judging session for set-up instructions*. The conference chair assigns 3 judges to each oral presentation. If the keynote speaker is present for the entire day, we ask that he/she participate as one of the judges for the oral presentations. The remaining judging spots are assigned to two senior members of the organizing committee. Average the 3 of scores with the abstract rating for the final score.
- c. Oral presentations are judged using NIH 9-point scoring criteria 1 = exceptional and 9 = poor on visual appeal, scientific content, and delivery of presentation
  - i. High Impact - 1=Exceptional; 2=Outstanding; 3=Excellent  
Moderate Impact - 4=Very Good; 5=Good; 6=Satisfactory  
Low Impact - 7=Fair; 8=Marginal; 9=Poor
  - ii. Orals are tracked on a different Google Form than poster presentations.
  - iii. [Click here](#) to view the format of the Google Doc with the 2020 oral presentation scores
    1. In the 'combined scores' you will be able to easily see the average score and ensure each oral was judged three times
- d. **Virtual:** In a virtual environment, these presentations are hosted live.

## 11. Poster Sessions

### a. Grouping (**things to keep in mind doc**)

#### i. In-Person

1. Location in the room – group posters with similar topics together. This is important from a networking and collaboration perspective. Many collaborations have come from this thematic placement of posters.
2. Numbering posters and poster boards – snake poster numbers on boards.



## ii. Virtual

1. **Posters:** Posters are pre-recorded for a set time limit (usually four minutes) and shared with the administrative lead ideally two weeks in advance. They can be created as a short slide set or in a traditional poster format, but we have learned that the slide set works better virtually. Traditional poster format can be hard to read if not zoomed in on during the recording. Poster videos are then uploaded to different YouTube playlists for each breakout poster session room in the order in which they are organized in the abstract book.
  2. **Poster Session Zoom Breakout Rooms:** The conference chair and vice chair do their best to divide all posters into equal groups by topic (i.e., Quality improvement - Healthcare practice, Pathophysiology of acute & chronic diseases, COVID-19 treatment & clinical outcomes, Health disparities & health equity, etc.).
  3. **Moderators:** Each poster breakout should be assigned a faculty moderator to field audience questions and keep the breakout room on time. This is a good opportunity to get early-career researchers and faculty (i.e., career development awardees) involved.
  4. **Administrators:** In a virtual setting, it is important to assign an administrator to each poster group to run the prerecorded poster videos and spotlight each presenter during their time slot.
  5. **Training:** Host a moderator and administrator training session a day or two before the event. Walking everyone through the poster session “run of show” can help clarify what is being asked of them and allow people to ask questions. This is very important, specifically if it’s virtual.
  6. **Housekeeping script and general instructions**
- b. **Presenter instructions:** All submitted abstracts not selected for an oral presentation are invited to present a research poster.
- i. **Virtual:** 4-minute prerecorded poster presentation using a 5-slide PowerPoint to present their research projects. **How-to document**
  - ii. **In-person:** Traditional 36x60 inch research posters need to be printed and displayed during assigned poster sessions (I/AM or II/PM).
    1. The poster boards we use are approximately 46x58 inches.
    2. Pushpins are provided by conference staff.
    3. We ask presenters to mount and remove their posters before the event starts or during breaks/lunch so as not to disturb the Featured Research talks or oral presentations.
    4. The Department does not provide funds for printing.

## 12. Poster Judging

- a. **Poster judge invites:** Invite emails are sent to all DOM Research faculty around the same time as registration opens soliciting interest and availability to judge during one or both poster sessions.
- b. **Judge collection survey:**
  - i. First and Last name, email, cell phone, division, academic title, area of expertise (clinical, basic, health services), and availability (Session 1 or 2 or both)
    1. Area of expertise (clinical, basic, health services) is collected for each judge to help with assigning judges to posters or oral presentations.
    2. It is important to also collect cell phone numbers in case they fail to show up or forget to submit their scores.
- c. **Judging assignments:** The conference chair and vice chair work together to match 2 judges to every poster or oral presentation. Judges may be asked to judge posters outside of their area of

expertise. If possible, solicit enough poster judges to assign 3 judges per poster; it alleviates the stress of the day to make sure there are at least two scores per poster to average.

- i. It has been our experience that ~25% of judges do not show, so plan to have 5-10 extra judges on standby
    1. Poster moderators can serve as backup judges for poster groups, if virtual.
    2. If a poster is judged 3 times, drop the lowest score.
  - ii. **Judging assignments** are sent via email using a mail merge to individualize the am/pm assignments for each judge. **Pro tip:** include the URL link in the email communications for easy “click” access. Create a QR code for the day of printed materials for easy “scan” access on mobile devices.
- d. **Day of poster judging:** The judges are given their assigned abstracts about a week before the event and are required to visit each poster during the poster sessions to interact with the presenter.
- i. Posters are judged using NIH 9-point scoring criteria 1 = exceptional and 9 = poor on the following criteria: overall scientific merit and content of presentation, innovation, and significance of findings, organization and clarity of presentation, presentation style and delivery, and the presenter’s ability to answer audience questions. *See the Prize/Awards section for descriptions of awards.*
    1. High Impact - 1=Exceptional; 2=Outstanding; 3=Excellent  
Moderate Impact - 4=Very Good; 5=Good; 6=Satisfactory  
Low Impact - 7=Fair; 8=Marginal; 9=Poor
  - ii. Poster presenters are required to be present for their poster to be judged.
  - iii. Consider using Google Forms as your online judging platform.
    1. Google Form exports in real time to a Google Doc where you can monitor scores coming in and easily filter.
    2. [Click here](#) to watch a video on how to set up your form and link it to a Google Doc
    3. [Click here](#) to view how we have formatted the form export in a Google Doc
      - a. In the ‘compiled scores’ tab, manually enter poster numbers, abstract review score (average of two), poster session, and presenting author title. This helps when sorting. Formulas have been added that pull from the ‘Form Responses’ tab that total and average live scores.
        - i. Final poster scores are comprised of the abstract reviewer average score and two judge scorings. *See the Abstract Review Process section for more information.*
      - b. While the poster sessions are going on, a member of the support team should keep a close eye on the ‘Number of Live Reviews’ to ensure all posters receive 2 live scores as well as to ensure judges are judging on the right scale (ex: if a judge leaves a comment saying “best poster ever” but gives the poster a score of “9” has reversed the scale.
        - i. If there is a doubt about a score and time allows, someone should attempt to contact the judge to confirm scores.
        - ii. **Pro tip:** Collect the judge’s number on the signup form to make contact if needed.
      - c. Keep a copy of the master poster judge assignments handy to confirm they are judging the correct posters.
        - i. **Pro tip:** Include the poster number and the presenting author's last name on the judging Google Form to double-check check judges are entering scores for the correct poster. If the wrong poster

number is selected, it can be corrected on the Google Doc, so it calculates properly.

**e. Tabulating final scores**

- i. Once all scores are in and all posters have received the required number of scores, you can sort by lowest score and then category to determine the winners.
  1. Note: the lower the score the better the poster!
  2. Ties are adjudicated by the Department Vice Chair for Research.

**13. Prize/Awards**

- a. **Certificate templates**
- b. Awards were introduced in 2011
- c. Certificates and cash prizes are awarded to researchers who have contributed the highest quality oral and poster presentations. A total of six awards are given in the following categories: best clinical/translational research oral and poster presentation, best basic science oral and poster presentation, and best quality/health services research oral and poster presentation.
- d. **Monetary prizes:** Awardees must be present during the Research Accomplishments and Awards Ceremony to receive a prize and be a member of the DOM to receive the monetary award.
  - i. In 2023, we stopped offering monetary prizes for financial reasons.

**14. Presentations**

- a. **Welcome slides:** These slides are created by the admin lead for the event to provide a general overview of the conference's events (i.e. keynote address, featured research talks, etc.) and serve as a reminder to share the event on social media. In a virtual environment, including the Breakout "how to" slide is a good idea. The Department Chair presents the slides during the opening ceremony.
- b. **Research accomplishment slides:** The admin lead can combine the research accomplishment slides with the welcome slides for the Department Chair to present during the open ceremony.
  - i. The purpose of these slides is to highlight the departmental footprint and impact, as well as to report the number of research sites, faculty, MDs/PhDs, staff, clinical and postdoctoral fellows, residents, and PIs. This also an opportunity to spotlight departmental research figures, such as total funding and proposal dollars, number of NIH awards and dollars, numbers of K awards, active clinical trials, enrollees, and publications, as well as advertise overall engagement of departmental research support programs over the last year and winners of other various departmental awards and grants.
- c. **Research Day Award slides:** It is a good idea to start the awards presentation by reminding the audience of the judging criteria. Winners are selected based on judges' scoring of the following criteria: overall scientific merit and content of presentation, innovation, and significance of findings, organization and clarity of presentation, presentation style and delivery, and the presenter's ability to answer audience questions. Then each award gets two slides, for example;

(slide 1) Best oral presentation (Basic Science Research)

*And the winner is...*

(slide 2) Best oral presentation (Basic Science Research)

***Sarah McClellan***

*"How to plan a kicka\$\$ research conference"*

***Congratulations!***

The award slides can be prepared in advance by the conference administrative team and filled in "day of" once the judges' scores have been tabulated. They are usually presented by the Department Chair, but the Department Vice Chair of Research may read the names while the conference chair hands out the certificates. *See the Prize/Award section for accompanying certificate templates.*



- d. **Rolling slideshow:** During breaks and poster sessions, create a rolling slideshow to project on screen in the main space to advertise/promote department research resources, conference booths (see *Booths section for more information*), etc.
- e. **Virtual**
  - i. **Breakout “how to” slide**

## 15. Building the Agenda

- a. **Virtual:** Zoom fatigue is a real thing. Trying to limit a virtual conference to a half-day event (8 am – 2:30/3 pm) is advised.
  - i. **Concurrent Session:** To pack in all talks, consider hosting concurrent sessions for featured research talks and oral presentations. See **2021 agenda**.
  - ii. **Poster Sessions:** First and second sessions
  - iii. **Breaks:** It is recommended that you organize the agenda to include a 15-minute break and/or 30-minute lunch immediately following both poster sessions in case they run over time. Work in breaks (even if 5 minutes) between all sessions - naturally some groups go over despite everything we try.
- b. **In-person:** Registration opens 15-20 minutes before the Welcome (7:30 am). The event culminates with the Awards Presentation and wraps up at 5 pm. See **2022 agenda**.
  - i. **Poster Sessions:** A.M. and P.M. sessions
- c. **30-minute Featured Research Talk:** Given by a senior faculty member, usually the recipient of the senior faculty award – RWA Research Award.
  - i. The 30-minute featured research talk is scheduled for the end of the day right before the Awards Presentation to give the administrative support team time to tabulate awards and create slides and certificates.
  - ii. In 2023, we renamed the senior faculty Featured Research talk as a “Lifetime Achievement in Research” 30-minute talk.

## 16. Developing the **Abstract Book**

- a. Mail merge in Word to quickly move over abstract details.
  - i. The spreadsheet with the list of the posters is used as the data file, and the column headings are the fields that are inserted into the main document template. The list should be sorted before the merge in the order that the posters will be listed in the abstract book.
  - ii. The **template** [2022 Abstract Book Mail Merge Main Document.docx](#) has the fields from the data file formatted with how the posters are listed in the abstract book.
  - iii. The mail merge feature in Word is used to create the abstract book.
    - 1. [Video on How to Do a Mail Merge](#)
- b. **QR code**
  - i. Once the abstract book has been created, use a QR code generator to create a QR code to access the abstract book.
  - ii. Create and print signs with the abstract book code to be posted on all posterboards, lunch tables, and registration tables.
  - iii. Note: The abstract book is not posted publicly to avoid any future issues with publications and to avoid sharing unpublished results that presenters wish to keep private for now.

## 17. In-person

- a. **Setup:** Plan to have the administrative support team meet in the conference space the afternoon/evening before the event to set up anything that can be left overnight in the space. The event organizing committee, specifically the administrative support team, should plan on meeting in the event space about an hour before registration starts to meet catering and any final setup.
  - i. **Posterboards and easels:** Poster boards for the event are reserved through Campus Services with the help of the space coordinator. Emory Campus Services allows 30 poster

boards to be reserved for any one event. Having backup easels is also recommended. Check that the posterboards are set up according to the diagram and add numbering to the upper corners.

1. Posterboards can be utilized on both sides allowing for 60 posters per session.
  2. Easels are used for “the poster of posters” and other signage.
  - ii. **Poster of Posters:** matches poster numbers to posterboard assignments to guide presenters to the correct poster board. Set up on an easel right inside the space entrance.
  - iii. **Tables:** If you didn’t reserve tablecloths through catering and are using your own, put them out and drop abstract book QR codes on each table.
  - iv. Put water bottles on moderator tables along with several copies of the agenda, moderator instructions, and instructions for the election timer (if using). *See the AV Support section for more information on electronic timers.*
- b. **Space/IT:** It is important to identify and reserve a space large enough to accommodate a research conference as early as possible. Emory DOM attendance is estimated to be ~300 each year. In 2022, our attendance count was around 350. Space is usually requested around the beginning of the year and organizers work closely with the space coordinator to reserve IT equipment, poster boards, chairs, tables, etc.
- i. Typically, the events space will handle the projector screen, podium, and wireless microphones (at least 2 but 3 is probably best). *See the AV Support section for additional information.*
    1. Consider offering a lapel mic option but have found that speakers prefer the microphone mounted on the podium.
    2. One handheld microphone should remain on the moderator's table.
    3. One handheld microphone is used for audience questions.
  - ii. Make sure that Emory Facilities are looped in as well. Your room coordinator will provide a room sketch with the layout of chairs and stage (with skirting). For our DOM Research Day, we have had 200 chairs in the past in Cox Ballroom, but the Student Center holds more depending on how the room is opened. Also reserve three long rectangular tables for catering, two for moderators at the front of the room, and at least two for registration tables at the entrance. It is helpful to have a visual prompt for speakers, so they don’t go over time. Consider using an electronic timer with lights (red, green, and yellow) on the podium that helps speakers stay on track.
- c. **AV Support:** Consider hiring additional AV support (highly recommended). It runs approximately \$800-\$1,000/day but is well worth it for peace of mind. They will control the presentations and all transitions.
- i. In the past, we have requested two computers and a monitor that sits at the podium. (This way, our team laptops are not used). Going forward, we decided that it would be best if there was a third computer for the moderator's table as well. Speak to whoever is managing IT for the day and let them help decide what hardware is needed.
  - ii. Send all presentations to the AV guy and provide them with a run-of-show.
  - iii. Have the AV team arrive at least 30 minutes ahead of start time to set up.
- d. **Catering**
- i. We typically order through Emory Catering and recommend checking with preferred vendors for any space. If you go outside a space’s preferred vendors list, there may be additional charges.
  - ii. Reserve food tables with space reservation and check that linens come with catering, if not, they may be borrowed at a considerable cost.
  - iii. Depending on the conference timing, plan to order breakfast, coffee, lunch, and afternoon snacks.

1. Coffee (to arrive before the start of the event): Regular and decaf coffee with half and half, low-fat milk, and sweeteners, hot tea service with honey, lemon, and sweeteners, and ice water with lemon.
  2. Lunch (to arrive before lunch break): We prefer boxed lunches (sandwiches/salads, bag of chips, fresh fruit, dessert, and bottled water) over buffets because the line is too long at the buffet to fit into the allotted time for lunch. Remember to order beverages; ice water with lemon, sweetened and unsweetened iced tea, and lemonade.
    - a. We have found there are a lot of salads left over.
  3. Snacks (middle of the afternoon, i.e., 2:30ish): various snack mixes, granola bars, coffee, tea, and ice water refresh.
- e. Registration tables**
- i. Name tags: Alphabetize by last name so people can find them easily on the registration table.
  - ii. Separate the poster judge nametags and paper clip them to their **poster instructions and assignments document**.
- f. Agendas and abstract books**
- i. Printing has been replaced with digital alternatives.
  - ii. Only need printed copies of the agenda.
  - iii. Abstract book QR codes for digital access throughout the event
- g. Booths**
- i. Information booths are available throughout the day to attendees. They are set up in a separate space from the actual proceedings, so they aren't a distraction during talks, etc.
  - ii. Should be invited early in the planning process to ensure attendance.
  - iii. Consider using registration reminder emails to advertise the presence of the "booths" and create a slide for the rolling slideshow during breaks and poster sessions to advertise and announce their presence during breaks and/or lunch.
  - iv. Invitees include RAS (Research Administrative Services), CTSA (Clinical Translational Science Alliance), WHSC (Woodruff Health Sciences Center) library, DAB Core, and OCR (Office for Clinical Research), ORC (Office of Research Compliance), etc.
  - v. Due to low engagement, booths were removed in 2023 but offices were allowed to provide brochures or "swag" to have available to attendees on the registration table.
- h. Social Media**
- i. Promote the event on social media utilizing the capabilities of each platform. Ex:
    1. Create an event on LinkedIn and invite connections/page followers.
    2. Add event reminders on Instagram posts/create event countdown in IG stories.
    3. Create an event on Facebook and invite followers.
    4. Use video capabilities to give a behind-the-scenes view of the space, speakers, planning, etc.
    5. Create an event hashtag and use it in all posts promoting the event. This is a good way to track who's posting about the event, i.e., #23DOMResearchDay
  - ii. Identify previous attendees and "influencers" (department members who are active on social and have a following) who would be open to sharing the event on social media.
  - iii. Use images/photos from previous years instead of graphics when possible. You always want social media to feel personal and not like an "advertisement."
  - iv. Ask invited speakers/key stakeholders to reshare conference posts to their personal accounts. Ensure that you tag their department/organization so they can reshare, too.
  - v. If the event is highly attended, suggest posting live "day-of-event" on platforms to not only showcase the event but also to create interest for those who did not attend. An easy

way to do this would be posting Instagram/Facebook stories, TikTok stories, “live tweeting” on Twitter, etc.

- vi. Ask attendees/speakers/staff etc. to live post during the conference using the hashtag and tagging your account.
  - 1. When you are tagged, always interact by liking/commenting, and/or reposting to personal accounts.
- vii. Ensure that you do a “post-event” recap on social media and that you are using a mix of photos including speakers, poster presentations, networking, etc. Ensure that you have a mix of posed and candid shots. Be sure to consider the diversity of subjects (science and people).
  - 1. Always tag individuals/departments/teams in the post and photos, so they can repost on their end.
- viii. Use content from the previous year to promote upcoming conferences on social media.

## 18. Post-Research Day

- a. **Clean up / breakdown**
- b. **Communications:** Work with the communications team to draft wrap-up pieces.
  - i. [Event summary](#)
  - ii. [Award winner highlights](#)
  - iii. If applicable, identify a human-interest storyline from the event (i.e. [faculty member working with their child on a project](#), [high school student poster](#), etc.)
  - iv. Consider pitching event summaries/highlights to external publications – scientific journals, AAMC, other university communications (outside of DOM), etc.
- c. **Review analytics**
  - i. RSVP vs. Attendance: to get an accurate headcount
  - ii. Communications schedules
  - iii. Social media engagement
- d. **Debrief:** Schedule a meeting with the conference organizing committee to review what went well and what needs to be changed for future years.
- e. **Finance:** Make sure you have collected all invoices/receipts (AV, catering, keynote travel receipts, etc.) and send them to the department finance team. Check that the keynote honorarium has been processed.
- f. **Review feedback**
  - i. Introducing in 2023 – will use CTSA conference evaluation as a starting point.