Enhancing Science Communication from Academia to Lay Audiences

TEAM SERENDIPITY
LITES PROGRAM
The Bad

Quantum Statistical Mechanics::
https://youtu.be/b1P0hurY6UE
The Bad

The Good

Quantum Statistical Mechanics::
https://youtu.be/b1P0hurY6UE

The Real Magic of Quantum Physics:
https://youtu.be/BHOzudE1oRk
The Bad

The Good

And...

Quantum Statistical Mechanics::
https://youtu.be/b1P0hurY6UE

The Real Magic of Quantum Physics:
https://youtu.be/BHOzudE1oRk
Institutional Perspective

● Over 10,000 news stories within a year - 33% were research related

● Highlighting our work impacts:
  ○ reputation
  ○ patient outcomes
  ○ financials - through referrals
Goals of our Project

1. To identify if there are existing programs at Colorado universities that are actively working to enhance science communication from academia to lay audiences

2. To determine the need for new projects to be developed/initiated and how to best do this
Methods

- Surveyed **faculty** across campuses to identify if there is a need for additional training in science communication to **lay audiences**
  - Leveraged internal contact networks
  - Anonymous email survey
  - Convenience sample
  - Not tracked, single outreach
  - No incentive
Topics Covered

- Basic demographic data from campuses involved
- Assessment of knowledge and use of current programs (Goal 1)
- Assess need for formal programs to enhance science communication to lay audiences (Goal 2)
- Assess interest in, and preferred formats, for such programs (Goal 2)
- Open-ended question to assess additional resources and needs (Both)
Demographics: 262 Respondents

- CU Anschutz: 138
- CU Denver: 62
- CSU: 40
- Denver Health: 32
- Other: 3
Demographics: Academic Rank

- Instructor: 29
- Assistant Professor: 74
- Associate Professor: 79
- Full Professor: 80
Demographics: Academic Track

- Clinical Track: 74
- Research Track – Tenure or Non-Tenure: 161
- Other: 27
Assessment of Existing Programs
Survey Question – Have you ever received training in communication techniques from any of the following entities aimed at improving communication of scientific research with lay audiences?

- TED style talk
- Alan Alda Foundation
- AAAS Communicating Science Workshops
- A New York Academy of Sciences - Science and the City Program
- Union of Concerned Scientists - Communicating Science

Number of responses:
- Yes: 28
- No: 229
- I am not familiar with this technique/entity: 5
**Survey Question** – Have you received training in communication techniques from any entity/program that was not mentioned above?

- Yes: 77
- No: 185
Survey Question – Please list any (on or off-campus) resources for helping researchers learn how to communicate with lay audiences that you are aware of and were not mentioned previously.

Professional and Academic Studies

Institutional PR/Media Teams

Graduate School Training

Foundations (Robert Wood Johnson, Hartford)

Non-CU Institutional Workshops

University Communication Workshops
Conclusion:

There are few existing resources on any campus that focus on communication to the lay public.
Assess Perceived Need
Survey Question – How important do you feel it is to be able to effectively communicate with the lay public about your work?

- Very Important: 178
- Moderately Important: 74
- Slightly Important: 8
- Not At All Important: 2
Survey Question – How confident are you in your ability to communicate with lay audiences about your scientific work/discoveries in a way that is exciting and engaging?

- Very Confident: 55
- Moderately Confident: 143
- Slightly Confident: 53
- Not At All Confident: 11
Assess Perceived Need

Conclusion:

There is an unfulfilled need for this type of training
Assess Interest
Survey Question – If your campus made training on TED-style talks easily accessible and free, how likely would you be to attend such training, considering the following formats?
Conclusion:

There is interest across campuses in receiving this type of training and multiple formats would be acceptable.
Input from Participants...

- “This is an extremely important area for researchers!”
- “A webinar that can be accessed on an as needed basis would be helpful so the training is fresh in our minds.”
- “The training should not only include how to talk, but what to wear, how to stand, how to smile, and definitely how to say that what you are doing is cool.”
- “Let's get lay people in to critique us!”
Rationale and Proposition
i.e. “the Ask”
Rationale

The world shows:
- Proliferation of alternative communication strategies
- COVID’s impact on “virtual” training environments

We show:
- Demonstrated need for and interest in communication training
- Current lack of recognizable resources
The Proposition

To develop and disseminate training programs for faculty to communicate their science with lay audiences in an engaging and accurate way.
Suggested Next Steps

1. Find experts in the field of communication
2. Develop training program(s) with expert and faculty input
3. Disseminate across campuses in multiple formats
Thank You!