

My WIN 2008 Experience

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I had a great learning experience at the WIN conference this year. I attended three previous WIN conferences, but I was more involved this time. I really recommend that you seek ways to become involved in this important professional organization even as a student. I will share some of the ways I found to be involved and what I learned from the processes.

On the first day of WIN, my colleagues and I presented a symposium on integrating advanced writing into a nursing research course for undergraduates. We began planning our presentation last fall and collaborated with our college's librarian and our university's writing expert, so it was an interdisciplinary effort. It was good to learn from their perspectives. As we planned for the presentation, we anticipated 30 attendees, but over 100 came. This meant that I did not have enough handouts for everyone. So, I recommend overestimating attendance when planning handouts. In spite of this shortfall, the people who came seemed to enjoy it. Often when I met people, they would say, "oh, you were part of the writing in research symposium. Let me ask you a question." That was a fun experience. People knew me from participating in this symposium with my colleagues.

At the membership assembly, I was inducted into office as a member of the nominating committee. This is an elected three-year position that will involve periodic meetings with the other two nominating committee members. Running for office was fairly low-key, basically determining which office I wanted to run for and submitting a statement about my qualifications. My statement was posted on the WIN website during elections. If you want to run for office or would like to recommend someone for office, please let me know. 2009 elections will be for the board of governors and the nominating committee. Information about those offices can be found on WIN's website. In addition, WIN is currently looking for members to appoint to the following standing committees: bylaws, development, membership, program and on WIN's special committees: silent auction, Anna Shannon Mentorship Award Selection Committee, Jo Eleanor Elliott Leadership Award Selection Committee, and WIN-John A Hartford Foundation Regional Geriatric Nursing Research Award Selection Committee. Contact WIN, SN-4N, 3455 SW Veterans Hospital Road, Portland, OR 97239-2941 for more information about appointed positions.

When the call went out for poster judges, I responded that I was willing to be a poster judge. I had the pleasure of learning the role of a poster judge from Dr. Kathleen Knafl. From critiquing others' posters, a couple of key take home messages evolved. First, most poster presenters use too many words. Using succinct bullet points is much better in most cases than pasting sentences and paragraphs from a document. White space and photos or charts help break up the poster and make it more visually appealing. Second, it is important to be very clear about what you did and why you did it. Those lessons may seem simple and obvious, but I was surprised how many posters could have been vastly improved by following them.

The last day I presented a poster and moderated a breakout session. My poster was just one piece of my dissertation. I did not try to present the entire dissertation. This has two advantages: 1) there is more to share another day and 2) there was a smaller amount of information to present in limited space. It was a great experience discussing my work with others and hearing their ideas and feedback.

I enjoyed moderating a breakout session, something I was asked to do before a few weeks before the conference. This involved being sure the room and powerpoints were ready for the presenters, introducing the session and individual presenters, and monitoring the allotted time for each presenter. This was a fun and easy way to get to know a few more WIN members and take a more active role in the organization.