ACES Abstracts:
Guidelines for Students

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David J. Silva, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
What is ACES?

- Annual Celebration of Excellence by Students
  - Research
  - Creative Activities
- Entire day (Thursday, March 24)
- University-wide
  - Not college-specific
  - Not department-specific
What makes ACES challenging?

- The Audience
  - Intelligent
  - Well-educated
  - Successful
  - Invested in Student Success
  - Diverse

Smart people who aren’t specialists in your particular discipline
Connecting with the ACES Audience

- Dumb down / water down your material
- Make your abstract & presentation accessible
  - “easy to approach, reach, enter, speak with, or use”
  - “easy to approach, enter, use, or understand”
- How does one enhance accessibility?
  - Clarity
  - Connection
  - Little (or no) jargon
So... What about the Abstract?

Background  
- Submission ≠ acceptance
- Limit = 250 words  
  (Excessive texts will be truncated)
- Submissions are subject to subsequent editing
- Deadline: Thursday, February 10, 2011, 5:00 PM
- Notification: Tuesday, March 1, 2011
Abstract Review Committee

- 12 faculty members
- Diverse disciplines
- Random assignment
- Shared assumptions

(we’ll get to these later)
Stepping Back: What is an abstract?

- Summary of the presentation
- Sample of your talents
- Request to be included in the event
- Commitment to participate if selected
... And from the **Organizers’ View**?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>of the presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>of the author’s talents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Request</td>
<td>for inclusion</td>
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<td>Commitment</td>
<td>to participate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raw Material</td>
<td>for building a program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Potential Investment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk</td>
<td><strong>Minimize Risk!</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
A Point to Ponder

“Many abstracts are rejected because they omit crucial information rather than because of errors in what they include.”

Linguistic Society of America’s “Abstract Guidelines and Specifications”

http://lsadc.org/info/meet-ann10-abguide.cfm
Past Abstract Rejections from ACES

- Insubstantial
- “Promissory Note”
- Unprofessional
- Overly specialized
  - Too technical
  - Excessive jargon
  - Lack of attention to audience

What potential risks do each of these issues raise?
What does the Committee Seek?

1. A clear statement of the central issue
   - What’s it about?

2. A description of results, including reference to what was investigated (data, texts, etc.)
   - What did you find?

3. An interpretation of results
   - What does it mean?

4. A note on significance
   - Why does it matter?

Adapted from https://www.uta.edu/aces/submissions/
Key Linguistic Property of Abstracts

- Propositionally Dense
  - A large number of clauses occupy a small space
  - Each clause contributes new information
- Redundancy undermines Propositional Density
Eliminate Redundancy

- **Macro-level**
  - Each concept should appear once
  - Order of presentation matters

- **Micro-level**
  - Replace long phrases with shorter equivalents
    - *In the apparent unlikelihood that any subject were to experience physical discomfort akin to seasickness, …*  
    - *CHANGE TO: If a subject becomes ill, …*

**BUT!**

- Do not sacrifice transition words; they build logical arguments
  - however, conversely, consequently, additionally, …
To Recap…

- Your ACES abstract should be
  - Accessible
  - Propositionally Dense
  - Complete, i.e., includes...

1. A clear statement of the central issue
2. A description of results, including reference to what was investigated (data, texts, etc.)
3. An interpretation of results
4. A note on significance
Questions and Discussion

- David J. Silva
  - Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
  - Professor of Linguistics
  - Distinguished Teaching Professor
  - djsilva@uta.edu