

Assignment Title: Role-Play in Life Sciences Presentations

Type of Course: Introductory Genetics Course

Mechanic(s): Action

Draft of Prompt:

Existing Assignment: Group presentation on the results of the microbiome experiment – the students work for several weeks isolating microbes from their environment, characterizing their properties with pre-specified assays, and then IDing them via sequencing. At the end, they summarize the group's results in a presentation and present their findings.

New actions: Instead of having a 'present-by-numbers' type of presentation, the presenting students can choose to role-play one of three scenarios for their presentation:

1. Soliciting funding from a biotech/pharmacy company to develop their microbes as a potential tool/therapy
2. Explaining your project to a group of middle school students as part of the middle schoolers' first introduction to microbes
3. TED talk to science and microbe enthusiasts

The audience will get to role-play as well.

Effect on students: Turning the presentations into these scenarios should hopefully make the students more excited to present their work because now they have a goal and audience in mind that isn't just their TA and their classmates. It should also make them think creatively how their ideas can best be communicated with different types of audiences, which is an important skill in science communication. The overall guidelines of what must be included in the presentation will stay the same, but the students have to discuss and plan how to incorporate all the information while staying true to their scenario. In addition, this should hopefully get the audience to ask more questions and engage with the speakers, which will make it a more rewarding experience.