**WILKINSON LAB POSTER TEMPLATE INSTRUCTIONS**

***Note:*** *A poster is a communication tool used by scientists to tell a story about their research activities and share their findings with others. It is NOT a scientific paper written on a 3x4’ piece of paper. The poster template provided here gives the basic design elements and content that need to be in the poster. The text box size, orientation, arrangement, etc can all be changed to suit the specific project. This is just a launching point for producing a successful scientific poster.*

**Title:** The title should ideally be short enough to fit on one line. No one is going to read a multi-line title with a lot of fancy long words. What is the “newspaper headline” for your research? Some phrases to get the title started: “Identifying…” “Changes in…” “Understanding…”

**Authors:** You should be listed as the first author. Anyone that substantially helped with the research (think “I could not have completed this research without this person’s key contribution”) is also a co-author. They need to be asked to be a co-author on your poster! The director of the lab is listed as the last author.

**General Tips:** Here are general tips for formatting and making your poster reader-friendly. Remember, the poster is a tool to communicate your research in a more informal setting to other researchers that are milling about. They have over a dozen posters to get to and absorb the information. You want your poster to be visually inviting, clearly communicate your research question and main finding, and have enough detail to answer questions, but not so much that you create a wall of text! A poster is absolutely ***NOT*** a paper just written onto a 3x4’ piece of paper.

* Always use a sans serif font (e.g. Calibri, Arial, Microsoft font; NOT times new roman)
* Text in various sections should be a minimum of 28 point font. Someone should be able to comfortably read your poster from ~3-4 feet back without straining. You can test this by setting the zoom to 100 on your computer screen and taking a few steps back. Can you read the text *easily*?
* The text for figure legends and on graphs should be a minimum of 20 point font. This will be particularly difficult on graphs--- double check this!
* Always avoid paragraphs of text! If possible, everything on the poster should be in bullet points or single, bolded, key sentences
* Only headings should be written over colored boxes, NEVER text. Do not add background color to the text boxes
* Photos are great to illustrate a method or key part of your study system. However, unless it is a very simple photo and helps the visual of the poster, do not use a photo as the background of a poster.
* Go look at a bunch of examples! There are a lot of posters hanging up around the labs in Bessey that will help generate ideas on ways to present information and the types of content to include. Be warned, not all of the posters are examples of good posters. Try to identify for yourself what you do and don’t like about specific posters.
* Start by writing out the content of your poster using the headings below. Include the figures that will be in the results section. Review this document (and have other’s look at it) to make sure that there is a clear story:   
   - What is the knowledge gap?   
   - What are the research questions to address that knowledge gap?   
   - How were data gathered to address the questions?   
   - What is the answer to the questions (figures and discussion)  
   - What is the overarching conclusion from the data, and how does it tie back to   
   the original knowledge gap?

**Introduction:** The intro needs to be enough information that someone could read it and get the gist, but not so much that it is overwhelming. Remember, you only have your audience’s attention for 2-3 minutes!

1. The intro should be formatted as bullet points, ideally with no more than two lines of text per bullet point (three is ok, but definitely NOT more than three lines).
2. Think of the content of the intro as an inverted triangle. Start with broad background and quickly narrow to the knowledge gap
3. Have a separate sub-heading within the intro section for your research questions. That way, readers that are already familiar with your topic can just skip to the questions.
4. Consider if there is a conceptual diagram, flow chart, or table, that will help you articulate your research background and questions to add to the introduction.

**Methods:** Include enough detail so that readers know what you did and how to interpret your data. You do not need to include enough detail so that someone could reproduce your experiment from the information on the poster.

1. Start by describing your study system (pictures and maps are helpful here). If you are providing a bunch of “basic limno info” (e.g. lake depth, surface area, average TP, etc) consider creating a table.
2. Include information on the where, when, how much, what variables and relate it back to your research questions (“In order to address X, we did Y”).
3. Include information on the data analysis only if it is very unique or an uncommon method. For example, don’t waste space on saying “we did a one-way ANOVA to test for…” as this is a common statistical tool that you can briefly mention along with the results. However, if you applied a new model or a statistical tool that is not commonly used (e.g. wavelets), use the space to briefly describe the method and get the reader on board enough to understand your results.

**Results and Discussion:** Unlike a scientific paper, you can combine the results and discussion on a scientific poster, and organize this by the individual research questions.

1. Be sure to change the header on the template to align with your research question. Briefly (4-6 words) restating the question in the header may be effective here.
2. The data are the star of the poster, so make sure those graphs look good! The text on the axis labels needs to be big enough to read, the colors and symbols need to be different enough for people to tell apart at a distance, and most importantly ***ONLY INCLUDE THE DATA NEEDED TO TELL THE STORY.*** It is very unlikely that you will display every data point you collected. Some variables, trials, or time points may just add visual clutter and don’t serve the story. Edit edit edit!
3. Unless the project is specifically about a statistical method, the stats are only supporting characters, not the main characters of your story. Avoid things like bulky correlation tables and a ton of statistical detail if it’s not important to the story.

**Conclusions:** This is the place to state the main, take home message of the research

1. Tie your main statement back to the knowledge gap
2. Think creatively about how your research has advanced our knowledge and what we are able to do (or understand) now that you have performed and communicated this research.
3. You can include future directions, but they need to follow directly from the results of your research and be aimed at filling a new (or the next) knowledge gap. Don’t just make a laundry list of potential research projects or other variables to study.