Exit Report - Template

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| Name | Mitchel Daniel |
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| Task/Role | Plenary Committee |

Just leave a section blank if you don’t feel the question applies to your task.

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| Describe your role/task: Selecting, inviting speakers and organizing the stay of the Plenary speakers |

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| What did you wish you had known beforehand? | Figure out reimbursement system before speakers arrive, because it’s easier to get receipts, boarding passes, etc. before they leave (rather than having speakers mail things in later). |

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| Contacts | We worked directly with each of our plenary speakers to organize their travel. We also discussed travel costs with both the treasure and co-organizers to ensure the budget reflected the needs of speakers. |

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| What worked? | We invited the speakers 6 months in advance, which is important because many faculty are busy and you need to allow time to invite alternates. In your first email inviting the speaker, include a well-written message (0.5 to 1 page long is about right) that makes clear the prestige of the invitation, the audience they will be presenting for, and the appeal of the conference (e.g. high-quality talks from people at a range of stages in their studies/careers, in a collegial setting).  There was one plenary committee member in charge of writing the bio and introducing a plenary speaker and this 1:1 ratio evenly spread out the work. For making contact with the speakers, having one primary contact for each phase worked best. We split up the roles where one committee member invited the speakers, before the conference another requested talk titles and abstracts and confirmed travel plans, and after the conference another member was responsible for collecting reimbursement documents. |

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| What didn’t work? | List the things that you would change or do differently to save yourself time/energy/$ if you had to do the task again.  We gave the speakers a rough idea of the type of conference (e.g. large undergraduate contingent), but I don’t think we got this point across effectively, and the talks may not have engaged undergraduates as well as they might have. It would be good to stress this to speakers in future as soon as they are invited, so they can think about gearing their talks to their audience.  In addition, this year we also tried to broaden the scope of the conference by inviting someone to give a science communication talk. Although we think this is something that should continue to be done (as it highlights alternative careers people do with science degrees) we felt we could have made expectations clearer in terms of the nature of the type of talk we wanted. For example, this year’s speaker did not have slides, which would have complimented the stories she was telling and would have potentially helped to fill the large plenary room. |

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| Give a general timeline to completing the task. | At least 6 months beforehand, invite speakers. Once the speakers have confirmed, you can begin budgeting around their expected travel and accommodation costs.  About 3 months beforehand, get in touch about travel plans (mainly important for anyone that will fly/train in) and arrange accommodations. Offer to book the speaker’s hotel and transportation. We booked hotel accommodations for all speakers through our department and this allowed us to get greatly reduced rates.  About 1 month beforehand, send speakers info about the talk length and any other expectations.  At least three weeks before the conference (but preferably earlier so that this information is ready for people building the conference program) , confirm plans and request abstracts and talk titles. Within the week before give them contact info (email and phone number) in case any issues come up. Ask the speakers to keep their receipts/boarding passes for reimbursement. Prepare a short (e.g. 1-minute) introduction for each speaker.  During the conference, make sure organizers are around to help the speaker/answer any questions. |

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| Do you have any online accounts or account information to pass along? | N/A |

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| Future Goals | Communicate talk title and abstract deadlines more effectively to speakers. |

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| Other comments | We got cool gifts that were local (represented Toronto) and had broad appeal (decaffeinated tea, interesting jam, notebooks, mugs) and conference spirit (t-shirts!). One member took responsibility for gifts. |