I-RITE / I-SPEAK
Program Overview

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“Elevator Talk”

- We teach academic researchers how to communicate their work to a lay audience
  - Researchers = mostly PhD students, postdocs
- We implement the program through
  - I-RITE: written statements
  - I-SPEAK: oral presentations
- Outreach: taking the “finished products” into the world
Outline

- Program Goals
- (Very Brief!) Background
- I-RITE Overview / Process
- I-SPEAK Overview
- Outreach Efforts
- Next Steps
Program Goals

- Enable researchers to communicate their work to a lay audience
- Bring aspects of the research culture into the undergraduate/high school world
- Allow cultures of engineering/natural science and humanities/social science to interact and learn from each other
- Address need for improved contacts across cultures and time zones created by globalization of research
In the beginning…

- How do we better integrate research and teaching activities
  - For faculty
  - At a research university
- The concept of “pedagogical content knowledge”
  - Education jargon that argues for strong knowledge of a field and how to teach it
The Nobel Laureate Richard Feynman was once asked by a Caltech colleague to explain why spin 1/2 particles obey Fermi Dirac statistics.

He responded, “I’ll prepare a freshman lecture on it.” But a few days later he returned and said,

“You know, I couldn’t do it. I couldn’t reduce it to the freshman level. That means we really don’t understand it.”
So, why not get faculty to explain what they do to this freshman audience?

I-RITE piloted in 1999 with 12 PhD students

Currently, we have

- 200 I-RITE statements
- 10 I-SPEAK presentations

Representing

- 40 disciplines across all fields
- 4 universities in the USA; 8 in Sweden
I-RITE Process

- Voluntary program in US; some course credit offered in Sweden
  - encourage participation in a variety of disciplines
- Participants write about their work in 750 words, with drafts that
  - should be compelling and understandable to a 17-year old
  - contain a compelling title and “elevator talk”
  - discuss own research, and why it’s important in a broader context
I-RITE Process

🌟 Program length: Choose your flavor

🌟 2-3 day workshops
🌟 6 week online workshop
🌟 6 week face-to-face, 1 meeting/week

🌟 Curriculum

🌟 Best suited for face-to-face interactions
🌟 Focus on learning aspects of writing, critical reviewing, and revising
“Peer” Reviewing

- Statement drafts undergo multiple review cycles, using communication experts (NCA) and undergraduate writing students
- Participants learn to review others’ work, and better reflect on their own feedback

Peer Review Software

- Prototype created in 2000, customized for I-RITE process
- Enables program to be delivered online
Example Titles

- Why Does My Grandmother Need a Total Knee Replacement, While Yours Just Ran Her 50th Marathon?
- How Can a Gene Make a Male Court a Female?
- Letters to the Editor As a Forum for Public Debate
- How Does the Earth "Relax" After an Earthquake?
- Breathing House Dust Is Nothing To Sneeze At
- Never Change Your Batteries Again!
I-SPEAK Overview

- Piloted in 2002
- Participants use I-RITE statements as a basis for 10-15 minute talks
  - ...along with the 1-minute “elevator talk”
- Participants gave final presentations in a public forum

Issues
- Delivery style vs. content
- Expert vs. peer coaching
Outreach Efforts

- Ideas for I-RITE/I-SPEAK results
  - Use in class “course readers” (teaching)
  - Offer program participants a chance to deliver an oral presentation of their statements to classes
  - Provide lessons in critical reviewing to undergraduate and secondary school students
  - Use statements as a basis for more in-depth interviews
    - Use journalism and filmmaking students as apprentices
  - Establish a website that focuses on research
  - Feature statements on informational kiosks
Addressing Issues

- Interdisciplinarity within academic communities, both nationally and internationally
- Broader dissemination of academic findings among the general public and policy-makers
- Quality and accuracy of journalistic representations of academic research
- Greater appreciation from the broader community for the importance of academic research
- Graduate student professional development
Next Steps

- National/International Expansion
  - Due to interest in the US and beyond, we are considering options for the next academic year and beyond

- Looking Specifically at
  - instructional models
  - increased outreach
  - basic research on the program
  - potential partnerships
Further Information

Program website: [http://i-rite.org/](http://i-rite.org/)

Questions/comments can be addressed to [cgale@stanford.edu](mailto:cgale@stanford.edu)