

# **STUDENT CONFERENCE PROPOSAL GUIDELINES**



American Nuclear Society

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

ANS Student Sections interested in hosting the ANS Student Conference can apply to do so by drafting a proposal and submitting it to the ANS Student Sections Committee (SSC). This document was developed by past organizers of the ANS Student Conference to provide prospective conference hosts with information and expectations regarding the ANS Student Conference proposal process. The current document is an official and primary source of instruction on how to draft and submit a student conference proposal. For additional information on the ANS Student Conference and the ANS Student Conference proposal processes, visit the SSC website, <http://committees.ans.org/students/>, or contact the SSC at [ssc@ans.org](mailto:ssc@ans.org).

The ANS Student Conference is held every year in the spring and is organized entirely by the student members of the ANS. Conference participants include students, professors, professionals, and recruiters from all fields of nuclear science and technology. The conference focuses on the professional development and employment of student participants. Professional development opportunities have historically taken the form of guest speakers, student research presentations, workshops, tours, networking, and mentorship. Employment opportunities have taken the form of career fairs, interviews, and other recruitment events.

Current conferences are attended by approximately 350 students, 150 professionals, and dozens of universities and companies. The conference has become a large operation which requires extensive staff and complex logistics. The calendar time required to set up the conference is relatively long for a student endeavor: approximately 6 months to prepare a proposal and approximately 1 year +/- 2 months to execute the proposal. Because this commitment is longer than one school year, conference planning can be severely hindered by graduation of the students behind proposal submissions.

## 1.1 Outline of Proposal Process

- 1) Read this document.
- 2) Visit the “Student Conference” section of the Student Sections Committee (SSC) website, <http://committees.ans.org/students/>. On the site you will find links to past conference proposal documents, past conference websites, and other information.
- 3) Read the conference proposal *Judges’ Evaluation Worksheet* posted on the SSC website. The *Judges’ Evaluation Worksheet* is updated regularly, so be sure you are working with the most up-to-date version.
- 4) Visit past and current conference websites. Pay particular attention to past conference “program” documents, which may or may not be available through the websites. Google searches of “20XX ANS Student Conference” may be helpful.
- 5) Consider the perceived status of your Student Section *as seen by the SSC*. Your Section should be active enough to supply the staff and time to host the conference. Visit the “Student Section Standing” section of the SSC website and locate your Section. If your Section is “Not In Good Standing”, follow the instructions provided on the website to fix this. If you have not been in good standing for some time, this is a warning sign that you may not be ready to host.
- 6) Begin gathering information about the practical aspects of hosting a conference. Specific details are provided later in this document. Feel free to contact past conference chairs.
- 7) Send as many of the Section’s members affiliated with the proposal as possible to any student conferences or national meetings that occur while you are preparing the proposal. Also plan to send a contingent to the student conference at which the results of your application are announced.
- 8) Contact the SSC Chair ([ssc@ans.org](mailto:ssc@ans.org)) and inform him/her of your Section’s intent to prepare a proposal. By doing so, there is *no* implied commitment by the Section to submit a proposal. However, this ensures you will receive timely notification of any changes that impact the application process.
- 9) Write the formal student conference proposal document.
- 10) Submit your conference proposal to the SSC Chair ([ssc@ans.org](mailto:ssc@ans.org)) before the deadline posted on the SSC website.
- 11) Wait for the SSC’s decision to be announced, usually at the awards banquet at that year’s student conference.

## 1.2 Proposal Objective

Your ANS Student Conference Proposal should convince a panel of judges of your Student Section's ability to host a successful conference. There are two main components to a successful conference:

- 1) Sound leadership and vision
- 2) A sound logistical plan to execute that vision

Your proposal must demonstrate to the judges that you have both components covered. To have one without the other will result in an unsuccessful conference: a great vision without the means to accomplish it and a misguided vision with all the support in the world will each fail.

This document provides a skeletal frame from which to develop a sound logistical plan. For students new to managing large projects, this document will also serve as a partial guide to conference planning. (See also the *Student Conference Planners' Guide* posted on the SSC website.)

However, a sound vision is entirely reliant upon the proposal authors.

### 1.2.1 Logistics

Sound logistics are an essential but relatively mechanical part of any conference proposal. The logistical items which must be addressed in the proposal are described thoroughly in the following sections of this document. In judging, these logistical items are scored as either being satisfied or not satisfied based on the contents of the proposal. In the event that you cannot demonstrate in your proposal that one of the logistical items will be met (for example, you are waiting on a confirmation from a vendor), you should address the actions you have taken so that the judges can assess your plan for meeting the requirement. Should any part of the logistical items be unclear, contact the SSC at [ssc@ans.org](mailto:ssc@ans.org) for clarification.

Note that the logistical items listed in the next section are simply the SSC's minimum standard. Going above and beyond in your logistical planning can set your proposal apart from the competition.

### 1.2.2 Leadership and Vision

While the logistics of all successful conferences look more or less alike (we do it that way because it works!), the proposal should distinguish itself by demonstrating leadership and vision. Innovation is the key to a continuously improving annual student conference. However, a proposal should not be stuffed with radical ideas for the sake of calling itself "innovative".

A proposal with no new events or programs since the previous conference can still be the best – the emphasis is on lessons learned from past conferences and the continuous improvement of the conference experience. Be sure to highlight anything that may be new, different, or noteworthy about your plans.

A caution, when constructing your vision: *The conference focuses on the professional development and employment of student participants.* Past conferences have included other activities such as social events, professional networking, community outreach / public information, and local cultural activities. While these other activities are heartily encouraged, they should never overshadow the focus of the conference. *Any conference vision must keep professional development and employment as the key goals.* In the proposal, consider emphasizing the expected benefit/value of each planned event to the conference participants (students, recruiters, and professionals).

## 2. APPLICATION: THE PROPOSAL DOCUMENT

The elements in the next section entitled *Logistics* (Section 2.1) are specific proposal elements which judges can easily recognize as either being present or not present. The elements in the section entitled *Leadership and Vision* (Section 2.2) are general proposal attributes which judges usually evaluate more subjectively with a weighted or sliding scale.

The *Judges' Evaluation Worksheet*, discussed in Section 4.2, is the primary source of guidance for the actual scoring of proposals. The current document is the primary source of guidance for the proposal content.

### 2.1 Logistics

The logistical items of the conference proposal are listed below and detailed in this subsection. Each item is **REQUIRED** to be included in your proposal. However, they are not required to be presented in the given order or even broken down in the manner shown.

- 2.1.1 Dates
- 2.1.2 Attendance Projection
- 2.1.3 Preliminary Program
- 2.1.4 Facilities
- 2.1.5 Hotels
- 2.1.6 Transportation
- 2.1.7 Budget
- 2.1.8 Banking and Financial Oversight
- 2.1.9 Conference Committee Organization
- 2.1.10 Schedule / Milestones
- 2.1.11 Staffing
- 2.1.12 Liability
- 2.1.13 Support

In general, logistics pertaining to conference facilities and dates should be detailed and near-final in the proposal. This is because conference facilities usually need to be reserved immediately after a proposal is selected – thus you should demonstrate you are prepared to do so. The budget should also be as detailed as possible; this section provides the largest indication of the level and quality of planning done by the organizers. Other items are not required to be as detailed for the purposes of judging, but it is certainly appreciated.

### **2.1.1 Dates**

Choosing conference dates is a simple but critical decision. Failure to do adequate research before selecting the dates can completely ruin an otherwise perfect conference. Conferences are held in the middle of spring semester (traditionally between late February and early April). The proposed conference should be held late enough in the semester that students have time to return to school and get settled before they need to deal with conference plans such as travel, yet early enough not to interfere with finals.

Be aware that civic and university events (such as parents' weekend or sporting events) will draw in a lot of out of town guests, which affects hotel prices and availability. Holidays, long weekends, and exams will affect conference attendance, as will competing professional conferences. Annual local conferences can be expected to have priority over one time conferences such as the ANS Student Conference when it comes to reserving facilities, with the potential result of getting "bumped" for a repeat customer.

The conference dates may change between the proposal and the actual conference. This is fine; factors often change after the submission of the proposal. What is important to the judges is the demonstration of the process by which the organizers choose the date.

#### **In the Proposal:**

- Include at least two sets of possible conference dates, ranked by preference.
- Include a brief write up of the conference dates selection process.
  - Discuss the research process. Background research on the dates should be demonstrated to be exhaustive.
  - Discuss the justification for choosing the dates and their rankings.

#### **For Bonus Credit:**

- Include a chart like that shown in Figure 1, showing items that may conflict with conference attendance and/or facility availability. Consider:
  - Holidays (especially religious holidays and long weekends),
  - Campus events,
  - Spring breaks for all Student Sections,
  - Finals schedules for all Student Sections,
  - Other professional society conferences (HPS, INMM, ANS, etc.),
  - University academic and athletic calendars, and
  - Local events.

NOTE: Finals schedules are included in each university's "academic calendar" and are posted on university websites. A listing of all Student Sections is on the SSC website.

NOTE: The availability of critical conference facilities usually dictates the conference dates. Conference facilities are discussed in Section 2.1.4.



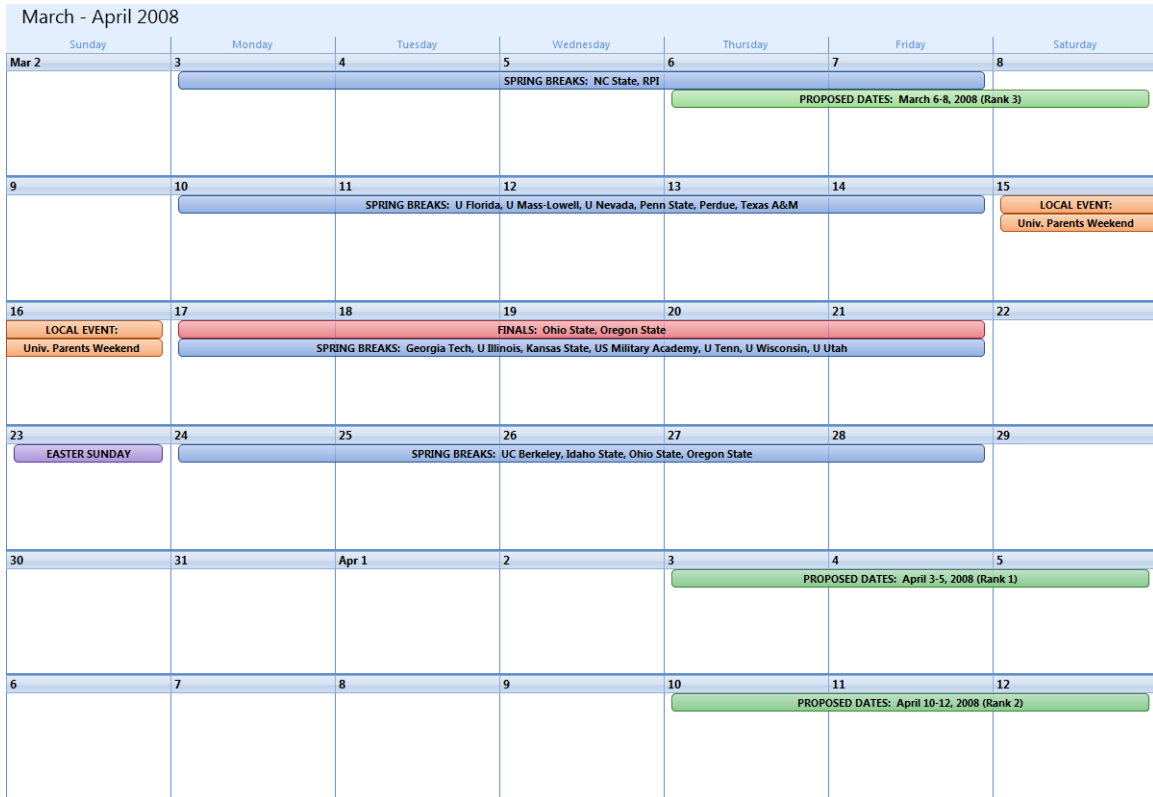


Figure 1 – Example calendar of ranked conference proposal dates (made with Microsoft Outlook™).

### 2.1.2 Attendance Projection

Planning requires an estimate of the number of students and professionals you expect to attend the conference. Use numbers from previous conferences in your projection model. Conference attendance figures, as well as the companies and universities which were represented, can be found in previous conference reports or programs (usually found on past conference websites). You can also contact past conference chairs.

You may wish to consider the proximity of other Student Sections to the conference location, the number of students in each nuclear engineering (NE) department, and the number of students in your NE department. The size of nuclear engineering departments can be found on departmental websites or in the ANS bi-annual publication “*Nuclear Engineering Education Sourcebook*” (Google it).

#### In the Proposal:

- State the number of students and professionals you expect to attend and provide a justification for that number. If it is significantly smaller or larger than recent conferences, discuss why it is different.
- Describe your contingency plans for if attendance is significantly higher or lower than your planning number. (Attendance cannot usually be reliably predicted until about one to two months before the conference.)

### 2.1.3 Preliminary Program

At the proposal stage, the preliminary program should consist of a detailed schedule of events (to at least the nearest quarter-hour) and corresponding descriptions of these events. It is important to lay out the activities of each day in order to demonstrate the flow of the conference, highlight potential event conflicts, and gain an idea of needed facilities. *Events competing with student research presentations should be minimized.*

The bare minimum for a student conference is: a welcome event/registration, student research presentations, a career and university fair, one SSC meeting, and an awards presentation. This minimum would make a boring conference. You should include additional events (prominent speakers, meals, a social, local tours) – but the specifics of those events are up to your proposal committee.

Should you win the conference, the schedule will continue to evolve as your planning progresses. For example, tours may only be available on a certain day, a local event may impact your planning, or the Chair of the SSC may request additional meeting time to conduct SSC business. However, the schedule of events in the proposal should be complete enough for judges to gain an idea of your proposed “attendee experience” and to assess the level of detail, foresight, and flexibility you are putting into your planning.

#### **In the Proposal:**

- Include a graphical schedule similar to that shown in Figure 2.
- Include a write up which discusses each event.
  - Present event logistics, such as catering, audiovisual services, and room setup.
  - For non-standard events such as workshops or industry interaction, discuss the benefit/value of events to the participants.
  - This is a great place to demonstrate your leadership and vision by highlighting improvement and innovation over past conferences.

NOTE: Student research presentations are traditionally 20 minutes (15 to present and 5 for questions).

NOTE: Be realistic about “hidden time”: downtime between events, time to travel between facilities, time required to convert a room from one setup to another, time required to set up catering, time required to clean up a room after each event.

NOTE: Remember the focus of the conference: professional development and employment of students. The time spent on various activities should reflect this focus.

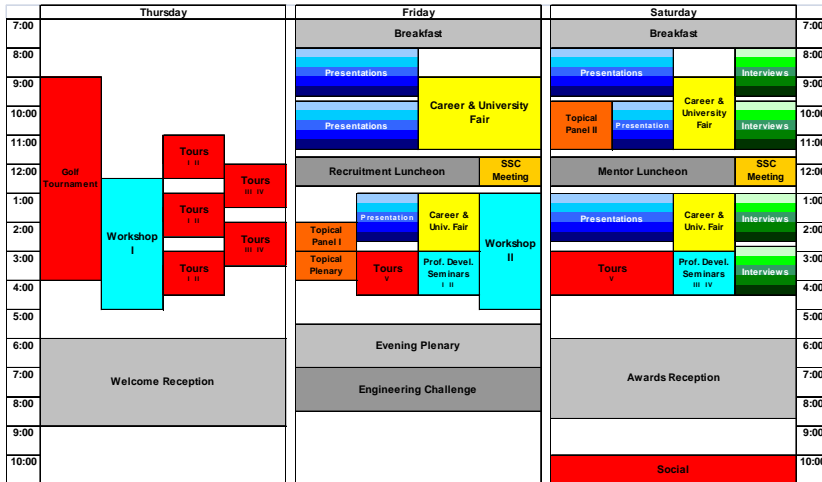


Figure 2 – Example graphical schedule. (Additional events have been added to demonstrate how to display complexity; this is a very packed schedule!)

## 2.1.4 Facilities

Getting adequate conference facilities for the dates you want is the most crucial part of planning the conference. *You cannot host the conference without adequate facilities.* Conference facilities which are large enough to host the Student Conference are hard to find and are usually booked solid far in advance. Creative compromises between dates, events, and facilities should be expected.

Past conference hosts have sometimes found that their preferred facilities were booked by someone else in the time between the proposal submission and the announcement of the conference host. **If your preferred facility does not require a deposit or official contract, consider reserving it for your preferred date even before you submit your proposal. Otherwise, request the facility manager to at least pencil you in for those dates with instructions to inform you immediately should they become contested.**

### In the Proposal:

- Identify and describe the prospective conference facilities and amenities.
- Estimate the number, type, and size of rooms required based on the preliminary program.

### For Bonus Credit:

- Give a detailed schedule for each room based on your preliminary program. Include room capacity, projected attendance, desired room setups, catering, and audiovisual requirements for each event. Include setup and takedown time.
- Include a graphical room schedule similar to that shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4.

NOTE: Be aware that larger facilities often try to maximize their profits by running concurrent events. If you are not using all the rooms at your desired facility, inquire specifically about whether other events may be going on at the same time.



### **2.1.5 Hotels**

Choosing hotels can be challenging because they are constrained by costs, proximity to the conference, and proximity to each other. Clustered hotels make for better transportation logistics. It is recommended that a variety of hotels (at least two, preferably three) be provided. Professionals and recruiters will expect at least one major chain (Marriott or Hilton family). Students need cheaper hotels. Note that professionals can be expected to have rental cars, so if you are forced to choose hotels in widely different locations, adjust your transportation plans accordingly.

#### **In the Proposal:**

- Identify the first and second choice sets of hotels as well as capacities.
  - Give the expected room cost per person.
  - Provide the maximum number of hotel rooms the hotel is willing to block out and the number of people who can be accommodated in each block.
- Include a map which shows the proximity of hotels to conference facilities.

NOTE: Hotels are a good area to over-prepare. If students end up scattered across town, bus round trips become unnecessarily long and/or expensive.

NOTE: As with conference facilities, hotels may already be booked a year in advance. Check with the hotels you intend to use to see if they have any other events scheduled.

NOTE: In the event that room rates are prohibitively high, consider creative arrangements such as subsidizing student rooms by paying a flat fee to the hotel.

NOTE: Students can be packed, stacked, and racked 4+ to a double-double (2 double beds). Professionals should be expected to each have their own rooms.

### **2.1.6 Transportation**

The proposal should address transportation to, from, and during the conference.

To/From: The cost of air travel for the different Student Sections to the conference city needs to be estimated in order to determine travel reimbursement costs for the budget. A means of transportation from the conference airport(s) to the conference hotels must also be identified. These can be airport shuttles, hotel provided shuttles, conference provided shuttles, or even public transit such as a metro. The ground transportation does not have to be paid for by the conference; however, the cost to each student must be reasonable.

During: Shuttle transportation for students from conference hotels to the conference site(s) should be provided if the distance is further than 1/3 mile. Professionals may be assumed to have rental cars, but some choose to ride the shuttle. Shuttle access should be provided to professionals, but you should also confirm that you have adequate parking at the conference location for those who choose to drive (pay parking is acceptable).

### **In the Proposal:**

- Air Transportation
  - Identify local airports.
  - Estimate air travel costs per attendee for representative Student Sections. Estimates should correspond to the first choice conference dates.
- Ground Transportation
  - Identify how students will get from the airport to their hotels.
  - Include the cost, trip length, and the departure frequency.
  - Identify who pays (students or the conference).
- Conference Transportation
  - Identify how students will get from their hotels to conference events.
  - Include the cost, trip length, and the departure frequency.

NOTE: Historical airfare prices for various city pairings and times of year can be found on several major travel reservation websites.

NOTE: A 40 minute round trip time from hotels to the conference site should be considered an upper limit. Remember to account for loading/unloading of passengers.

### **2.1.7 Budget**

Ideally, the budget should predict the cost of the conference (and thus the fundraising requirements) within 5%. The judges examine the detail, accuracy, and thoroughness of the budget. Past conference proposals have tried to make their conference appear as economic as possible by low-balling or omitting numbers. While a low total budget number may impress the judges, *the judges will be more impressed by a complete budget* that considers all expected costs. Be forward and honest about financial figures: the actual numbers will not help or hurt the proposal, assuming they are reasonable.

The budget will continue to evolve as planning and fundraising progress. Guidance on final budgets and the budget process can be found in the *Student Conference Manual* on the SSC website. Here are a few things you should know regarding *proposal* budgets:

- A 100% student travel reimbursement should be included *as a planned expense* in your budget (that is, money towards out-of-pocket expenses such as travel, food, lodging, and registration fees should be allocated for *every* student attendee). A good target for the proposal budget is to return half of each student's costs.
- Revenue (fundraising) targets in the proposal should be 10%-15% higher than expected expenses, with travel reimbursement included in those expenses.
- ANS National provides \$5,000 in seed money and in return takes a 25% cut of the profits (calculated after travel reimbursements). Your 25% returned to ANS National goes directly to fund the seed money for the next student conference.

Here is the major thing you should know regarding *final* budgets:

- If your fundraising efforts result in greater revenues than targeted, you will be expected to increase student travel reimbursements, contributions back to ANS, and direct contributions to next year's conference in order to keep your profits at a reasonable percentage. If your fundraising is lower than targeted, the first thing to be cut is your Section's take of the profits.

**In the Proposal:**

- Include a detailed, realistic, and complete budget. The budget should correspond to the dates, projected attendance, preliminary program, facilities, and transportation in the rest of the proposal.
- Divide the budget into two sections: (1) expenses and (2) revenues. The expenses section should be further divided into two subsections:
  - *operations expenses* are the essentials required to host the conference (e.g. facilities, printed programs, and travel reimbursements).
  - *discretionary expenses* are the non-essentials (e.g. socials, attendee gifts, and profit) and are the first things to go if there are revenue shortfalls.
- Discuss your fundraising plan to raise the necessary revenue. It should be realistic (\$ per contributor) and achievable.
- Identify the order of budget cuts should fundraising not succeed. It is strongly emphasized that travel reimbursements *are the last thing to be cut* and that this may mean reduced socials or that the host Section takes no profit.
- Include the following figures specifically; they are the "figures-of-merit" that sum up the budget:
  - total target revenue
  - total expenses, subtotaled by operations expenses and discretionary expenses
  - cost-per-student (total conference expenses divided by total number of expected student attendees)
  - cost-to-student (average estimated out-of-pocket costs for each student attendee that does not attend the host university, not including travel reimbursement)
  - average planned reimbursement per student

NOTE: Fundraising for previous conferences can be estimated by tallying the sponsors listings in past conference programs. However, it is common practice to "bump up" sponsors to a higher listing level (e.g., an ANS division or a particularly large sponsor) and so more reliable numbers may be found by asking past conference chairs.

NOTE: Fundraising sources include registration fees, career fair exhibitor fees, event sponsorships, and donations. The ANS professional divisions historically have made significant annual donations to past student conferences.

### **2.1.8 Banking and Financial Oversight**

Conference hosts should have a system for handling checks, cash, credit cards, and taxes. Where possible, conference money should be separated from other Section transactions. Additionally, an oversight mechanism should exist for all transactions (for example, a bank account where every financial transaction requires the signature of two officers).

The tax-exempt status of your Student Section and the Student Conference is not to be assumed! Some Sections never achieved tax-exempt status, or had tax-exempt status but lost it by failing to file appropriate IRS forms. Some Sections are tax-exempt because of their affiliation with their student union or host university. Some Sections independently filed for tax-exempt status with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Every Section's situation is unique, but *not all past conferences have achieved tax exempt status*.

#### **In the Proposal:**

- Identify the banking system to be used by the conference.
- Identify the financial oversight mechanism for conference banking.
- Identify if and how your Student Conference plans to achieve tax-exempt status.

NOTE: The ANS Headquarters can provide banking services to the conference. When possible, this is the preferred system as it allows easy oversight and also confers tax-exempt status. Some student groups may have university regulations that do not allow this system; consult with the SSC Chair if you have questions.

NOTE: Credit cards have historically been dealt with using Pay-Pal™ when no better options are available.

NOTE: Many schools have a student organization bank which is already set up to provide sufficient financial oversight over Student Section accounts.

### **2.1.9 Conference Committee Organization**

The organization of the conference committee should be customized to the strengths and weaknesses of its officers. Many organizational structures have worked successfully in the past. Whatever you choose, responsibilities and reporting structure should be clear. Further, overall logistical coordination, fundraising, and budget management are Chair- or Co-Chair-level responsibilities. Do not assign these to a lower-level committee.

The decision-making process of the committee should also be established. Typically the conference chair(s) have full authority over the conference committee and ultimate responsibility for the success of the conference. However, there should be a formal set of written conflict resolution procedures for the committee – developed *before* any conflict occurs. Specifically, the process for adding, removing, and replacing committee members should be identified, including the chair(s).

It is common that a Student Section's first proposal is not selected, and the proposal is re-submitted in a later year. This often means the graduation of the students behind the



original proposal effort and a change in the named conference chair(s). The visionary leadership and organization skills of a chair who authors a proposal can be evaluated through the quality of that proposal. Unfortunately, a successor chair usually inherits the proposal. Because of this, if a named chair changes between proposal submissions without substantial changes to the proposal, additional detail about the new chair is required in the proposal. If a named chair changes between awarding of the conference and the conference dates, a similar process will need to be followed. In rare cases, if the ANS Student Sections Committee does not feel a replacement chair is suitable, they may direct the selection of a new chair or even change the conference to the runner-up school.

It is also common for the conference committee members identified in the proposal to change, even if the school wins with its first submission. Identifying backup committee members or understudies may be helpful to your application.

### **In the Proposal:**

- **Organizational Chart:** Provide a graphical organization chart showing titles. Identify a person to fill each position.
- **General Areas of Responsibility:** List the general responsibilities of each position.
- **Past Experience:** Include a listing of past student and national ANS conferences each committee member has attended. Participation in other professional organizations may also be mentioned. The conference chair(s) are generally expected to attend at least one student conference before submitting a proposal.
- **Letter of Endorsement for New Chair(s):** If the named conference chair(s) have changed since a previous proposal submission, but the proposal has not substantially changed, then include a letter of endorsement of the new chair(s).
  - consists of at least 400 words but less than two pages
  - presents the reason the specific individual(s) were selected as the new chair(s)
  - addresses the vision, leadership skills, and organizational capabilities of the individual(s), preferably with examples or past experience
  - is authored by someone personally familiar with the chair selection process
  - includes as many signatories as deemed necessary to be persuasive

### **For Bonus Credit:**

- **Decision Making Process:** Draft a set of procedures or operating guidelines for the conference committee.
  - Identify the procedure for removal/addition/replacement of a committee member, especially the committee chair(s).
  - Define the faculty advisor's authority.
  - Identify what kinds of decisions can be made by which conference committee members (e.g., decisions that require spending money).

### 2.1.10 Schedule / Milestones

As with any large project, there are many sequences of tasks which must be completed in parallel. Tasks are interrelated; one task may impact or define several other tasks. One method of balancing these sequences is with the use of milestones: tasks that represent the endpoint or convergence of several task sequences at once.

A good example of a milestone is the printing of programs. At this point, the conference program document is frozen and can no longer be changed. Thus, in order to print programs, all elements of the conference program (for example schedule, presenters in each track, speaker selection) must be final by the print date. Another example is the opening of registration. In order for registration to open, the website must be operational, the conference starting and ending times must be known, and all information needed from participants for the various events must be identified (e.g., meal choice, flight info and hotel info for transportation, MCNP user license number for workshops).

The proposal should present your schedule. There is no fixed format for this, but it should be presented in a clear and logical fashion so that judges can assess if there are any missed items or potential problem areas. You may find advanced project planning software helpful (e.g. Gantt charts).

#### In the Proposal:

- Identify major milestones and provide target dates for their completion. For each milestone, identify key tasks that must be complete to meet the milestone.
- Identify other critical tasks that must be accomplished (not necessarily tied to a milestone).
- For each key or critical task, identify who is responsible for it, when it should be completed by, and if there are any predecessor tasks that must be completed first.

Weeks Remaining	Event - Description	Date
	...	
26	<b>OFFICERS SUBMIT WEB-REGISTRATION NEEDS TO WEBMASTER</b> Each officer will formally email the webmaster with their information requests for the web-registration system. Cc the co-chairs on this email.  <b>Webmaster Receives ANS-Membership ID Needs from Co-Chair Internal</b> <b>Webmaster Receives Abstract Application Submission Needs from Technical Affairs</b> <b>Webmaster Receives Judge's Registration Information Needs from Technical Affairs</b> <b>Webmaster Receives Judging Criteria from Technical Affairs for Posting</b> <b>Webmaster Receives Student Registration Information Needs from Student Relations</b> <b>Webmaster Receives Professional Registration Information Needs from Professional Relations</b> <b>Webmaster Receives Food Registration Information Requirements from Program Events</b> <b>Webmaster Receives Hotel Registration Information from Hospitalities for Posting</b> <b>Webmaster Receives Airport Shuttle Registration Information Requirements from Hospitalities</b>	<b>Mon 9/17/07</b>
25	<b>MEETING 3 – WEB-REGISTRATION SYSTEM REVIEW</b> The webmaster will present the web-registration system for the committee's review.	<b>Fri 9/28/07</b>
24	<b>WEB-REGISTRATION OFFICIALLY OPENS</b> Web-registration officially opens including presenter registration.	<b>Mon 10/1/07</b>
	...	

Figure 5 – One example of milestone planning.

### **2.1.11 Staffing**

Your Section must have enough active students to support the conference effort. A recommended minimum is 10 dedicated students serving as the primary organizers for the conference, with an additional 20 students to staff the event. If your Section or department has fewer than 30 members, it will be necessary to recruit outside volunteers to help organize and staff your event. Arrangements with other groups (such as other departments or student societies) for additional staff should be presented in the proposal.

You may also consider flexible arrangements with other ANS Student Sections. For example, staff assisting with technical sessions could easily be from another Section. The larger and/or geographically closer Sections will likely be able to provide the most volunteers. A Section could volunteer their services free-of-charge or in exchange for some compensation such as guaranteed travel reimbursements or free registration.

#### **In the Proposal:**

- Identify the number of *day-of* staff needed to execute the conference and describe how this number was obtained.
- Describe the roles of each group of day-of staff and state which conference committee member each staff group will report to.

NOTE: There is no reason to be short-handed on volunteer staff. Make sure to have excess staff on hand during the conference.

### **2.1.12 Liability**

The ANS and the conference hosts inevitably assume some liability (risk). The common areas of liability are finances, contracts, and negligence. Examples of liability that might be encountered during an ANS Student Conference include:

- The conference committee signs a contract with a facility that includes a defined payment schedule and a financial penalty if the schedule is not met.
- The conference committee signs a contract with a hotel requiring a certain number of rooms to be paid for by students, and if they are not, then there is a penalty.
- The conference committee signs a contract for a social event with a guaranteed minimum of food and drink.
- The conference committee opens a bank account with penalties for overdrawing the account.
- The conference includes a social event that serves alcohol (someone could drink too much and hurt themselves or someone else; someone could drink underage).
- The conference includes some sort of event that could cause damage to an attendee or participant's property (e.g. fuse blows and shorts out ten university laptops, career fair room subject to theft).

- The conference includes some sort of event that could cause physical harm to an attendee. (Hint: all events could. Consider slips/trips/falls, food poisoning, and vehicle accidents in addition to more exotic risks like your skydiving social and drowning during your riverboat cruise.)
- The Student Section may owe federal or state taxes on student conference profits in certain situations.
- There may be a theft or accidental release of private information, especially that of private information associated with minors.

**In the Proposal:**

- Identify known and potential liabilities.
- For each, discuss whether you expect liability to be carried by the Student Section, the university, ANS National, or the host facility. Indicate whether the group has agreed to carry this liability if this is the case.
- Discuss any additional steps you are taking to help ensure the risk is minimal (e.g. ANS HQ reviews contracts, drink tickets at the social, liability insurance policy).

NOTE: Should you be awarded the conference, all liability should be clearly understood and documented before the conference takes place. The SSC chair and ANS headquarters can help you through this process.

**2.1.13 Support**

It is beneficial to show local support behind your Student Section’s proposal. If your Section is small or has not been active in recent years, a show of student support is also recommended.

**In the Proposal:**

- Include a letter of support from the
  - Student Section Advisor
  - Department Head

**For Bonus Credit:**

- Include a letter of support from the
  - ANS Local Section
  - Engineering School Dean
  - Students in the Student Section (particularly recommended for smaller Sections)

NOTE: Letters of support from anyone outside the ANS or your university (for example, potential corporate donors) will not be considered. Should you add them to your proposal anyway, these pages will be removed from your proposal before it is given to the judging committee and your proposal will be penalized. See Section 5.

## **2.2 Leadership and Vision**

The conference organizers demonstrate leadership and vision by having a clear idea of what their conference will be like, both mechanically from the logistics side and aesthetically from the participant's side. The leadership and vision component of the proposal is made up of less tangible elements that are harder to quantify. These elements are subjectively rated by each judge, usually on a weighted or sliding scale. This section of the document outlines some general concepts and ideas that the judges may look for.

### **2.2.1 Theme**

The Student Conference traditionally has a theme, chosen by the organizers and indicated by the title of the conference. The theme should be clear – you know immediately what it means – and should ideally focus attendees on an aspect of nuclear science and engineering that they might not otherwise spend much effort on. Past examples include “Expanding the Nuclear Family” (Texas A&M, 2008), “Nuclear Technology Around the World: Solving Tomorrow’s Problems, Today” (Oregon State, 2007) and “Living in a Nuclear-Free Zone” (UC Berkeley, 2003).

The theme should be central to the conference, rather than tacked on. In the proposal, your theme can be best reflected in your discussion of the chosen events. Speakers can be invited to address specific topics. Workshops can be focused on areas related to the theme. Material provided to participants can elaborate on the theme. You know you have a good theme when you find it is shaping the conference.

### **2.2.2 Participant Experience: Event Design**

Event design draws heavily on the designer's ability to appreciate the perspective of the attendees. Each event should be carefully thought through from beginning to end. How does it enhance the conference? How does it alter the participant experience? How does it meet the goals of professional development and employment of students? A visionary leader identifies the potential benefits that the conference can offer its participants and then designs events to best deliver those benefits.

Event design can manifest in the introduction of new events or the reinvention of events previously seen at earlier conferences. It is pretty easy to recall events you liked, events you didn't, what you liked about them, and what you thought could have been done differently. Ideas can be drawn from past student conferences, national meetings, topical meetings, meetings of other societies, events held by community groups, and any other large-attendee event you have attended.

Events should always be crafted with their intended benefit(s) in mind. Adding features or aspects to an event that do not support the intended benefit will merely make your events confusing, difficult, and expensive. Expect for new and improved events to be evaluated by the judges based on the perceived value/benefit to the participants. (Not all events require a lofty goal; benefits may be as simple as “people have fun”.)

EXAMPLE: You believe that students at the conference should be able to do more than just meet career fair booth exhibitors; they should also be able to accelerate the hiring process. In response, you provide recruiters with interviewing facilities and allow them to schedule students to interview on the spot.

EXAMPLE: You feel that students need help networking because many are adorably awkward in those pre-graduate years. In response, you design a mentor luncheon where students are seated with professionals in their field of interest by table.

### **A Special Note Regarding Socials**

Socials should only support a conference and never take away from it. It is assumed for judging purposes (and also by ANS HQ) that a participant will attempt to attend every event you list in your program to its full extent possible. Based on this, socials (and any other events) should allow participants adequate breaks for food and mental focus, as well a minimum of 8 hours sleep per night. For example, do not have a social that is scheduled to run past 10 pm unless it is the last night of the conference. Pay particular attention to Thursday and Friday evening events that might be physically strenuous or involve alcohol – these could deter participants from attending technical sessions.

Socials should be considered extra-budgetary and not divert funds away from professional activities or take precedence over student travel reimbursements. Liability regarding socials should be thoroughly addressed (see Section 2.1.12 regarding liability).

### **2.2.3 Participant Experience: Details**

As with event design, the logistical organizers must be able to appreciate the attendees' perspective. Ideally the events will leave the largest impression, but great event design can be completely overshadowed by logistical details. Your proposal does not need to have every detail of every event planned! However, it should demonstrate the level of detail you are working at so the judges can assess your ability to handle the small things.

When planning conference logistics, look to build on and improve upon past conference events. Think again about past student conferences, national meetings, topical meetings, meetings of other societies, events held by community groups, and any other large-attendee event you have attended. Instead of focusing on the main event, consider the surrounding details: facilities, furnishings, audiovisual equipment, timing, transportation, ease of finding information ahead of time. What worked well? What would you change?

EXAMPLE: You found it hard to enjoy the last plenary speaker because you were more concerned about when dinner was going to be served. So in your proposal you mention you will serve dinner in between the second and third speaker.

EXAMPLE: You never knew how long a shuttle trip from the hotel to the conference site would take or how long you would have to wait for the bus. This made it hard to plan your first day. So in your proposal you mention that bus schedules will be included in the conference program and posted on the conference website.

## 2.2.4 Proposal Attributes

There are several qualities of a good proposal that, while not listed on the *Judges' Evaluation Worksheet*, typically influence the judges in some way. The following are words that judges often use when discussing proposals. These qualities should be apparent in both the proposal document and the conference vision.

**Organization** – The proposal should flow in a clear and logical fashion.

**Professionalism** – There is no reason a student conference can't be better than the “grown-up” meetings. A good rule of thumb when designing your conference is: “professional conference first and student conference second”.

**Originality** – Every student conference is different and every university has something unique to offer. Highlight it.

**Comprehensiveness** – If it's not in the proposal, judges often assume you haven't considered it. Thoroughness is key.

**Responsibility and Integrity** – You must uphold the reputation of the ANS and the host university. Be transparent in financial dealings, avoid conflicts of interest, and properly prioritize (student travel reimbursements before profit, student interests before corporate interests, professional development before socials).

**Productiveness** – The conference should tend to the professional, academic, and employment needs of the participants.

**Fun** – The conference should be interesting and enjoyable for participants. Avoid boring events, dull speakers, and sessions of extended length.

**Aesthetics and Image** – Show us your branding, design, and marketing skills. These will be particularly important for fundraising.

**Economy** – The costs to students must be reasonable, as must the fundraising expectations. Have you identified where you can tighten your belt? Could you get the same for cheaper?

**Overall Proposal Quality** – The quality of the proposal document implies the quality of the eventual conference. If you can't write a good proposal, you probably can't write a good fundraising letter or speak to your gathered attendees. Grammar and spelling count.

## 2.2.5 Student Section Strength

In the year leading up to the proposal, the applying Student Section needs to demonstrate its strength, both at the local and national level. The proposal should summarize the strength of the student section, citing examples for the benefit of those judges who may not have personal knowledge of the section.

Activity at the local level is gauged by indicators such as the size of the Section, attendance at its events, the complexity or budget of its regular yearly activities, and its involvement and collaboration with the Local Section. Activity at the national level is typically measured by national/student conference attendance and Student Sections Committee (SSC) participation. National conference attendance implies Student Section strength and resources. Student conference attendance implies the Student Section fully appreciates the scope of the task of hosting a student conference. SSC meetings are held at every national and student conference and attendance by a representative of each Section is expected. *Participation at SSC meetings by Section representatives and the proposal authors is the best-correlated predictor of who wins the conference.*

### **2.2.6 Proposal Readability**

Unnecessary “fluff” or 50 pages describing the school history or meal options copied directly off a website do not add value to the proposal. On the contrary, a proposal that is not to-the-point simply wastes the judges’ time and patience. Remember that the judges are real people, so talk to them – through the proposal – like they are real people.

Consider including an *Executive Summary* (a one page section of the proposal that comes between the title page and the table of contents). The executive summary should hit all the high points of your conference vision and focus on facts, not opinions.

All supporting documentation, such as letters from your department head, should appear in appendices. All worksheets and calculations should be placed in appendices. Only worksheet summaries or calculation results should appear in the body. Tables and illustrations should be used whenever they result in greater clarity and conciseness.

## **3. SUBMISSION**

Visit the ANS Student Section Committee website, <http://committees.ans.org/students/>. Instructions for submitting your proposal will be posted on the website by mid-February. An announcement will also go out to all Student Section presidents (as long as you have provided the SSC with your current officer information).

Proposals should be in a near-universal digital format. PDF is recommended. Word documents are also acceptable, although formatting may be lost when judges open the document with different operating systems or versions. Creativity is encouraged, but please keep accessibility in mind – if the judging committee requires extensive instruction on how to install four video codecs to view your application, they will assume that your attendees’ conference experience will be equally difficult.

Proposals are typically emailed to the SSC chair. From there they are distributed to the judging committee either by email or website download. *Should you find your proposal exceeding 10 MB, you will need to reduce the file size.* Hosting the proposal documents on your own website does not remove this limitation!



## 4. EVALUATION

The proposal evaluation process is continuously evolving. The SSC's expectations of the proposals change with each passing conference. To reflect these changing expectations, the *Judges' Evaluation Worksheet* is updated almost every year by the SSC and the current *Student Conference Proposal Guidelines* document is updated when necessary. These regular changes reflect the increasing challenges of hosting the conference, responsibility of the conference hosts, the liability to the ANS, and the oversight obligation of the SSC.

Should any part of the evaluation process or this document be unclear, contact the SSC Chair for clarification at [ssc@ans.org](mailto:ssc@ans.org).

### 4.1 Evaluation Process

Before the submission deadline, a judging committee is formed from members of the Student Sections Committee (SSC). After the submission deadline, the submitted proposals are distributed to all the judging committee members. The *Judges' Evaluation Worksheet* (discussed in the next section) and any additional guidelines, instructions, and supporting data are also given to the judges. The judging committee members read the proposals, deliberate and discuss them for approximately two to three weeks before taking a vote. A majority vote of the judging committee members selects the next conference.

During the deliberation and the discussion period, the judging committee members gather additional information that can help them in judging from a variety of sources. Judging committee members may ask questions of the proposal authors via email, telephone, or personal meeting. They may contact the SSC Chair to obtain information on past operations of the student section (annual report, outreach events, copy of Glasstone application). They may use the internet or call vendors or facilities to check information given in the proposal document. Judging committee members have also been known to contact alumni from your Section to ask questions about the strength of the section or to get an independent take on proposal items.

The judging committee's decision is traditionally announced on the last night of that year's student conference at the awards reception banquet. However, the timing of this announcement is subject to change. For instance, if the student conference falls unusually late in the semester or the winning school has identified a particularly early desired date for their conference, then the announcement might be rescheduled accordingly.

After the decision is announced, the judging committee provides written feedback to all submitted proposal authors. This feedback will generally include mention of the judging committee's perceived pros and cons of each proposal and suggestions for improvements before resubmission the following year. The judging committee will also provide detailed guidance to the winning school about specific aspects of their proposal that should be addressed or considered when planning the conference.

## 4.2 Judges' Evaluation Worksheet

The *Judges' Evaluation Worksheet* is a document used to convey how proposals have historically been judged. The *Judges' Evaluation Worksheet* is intended as an insight into what previous judges felt were the important proposal elements and how their decision was shaped. The judging process is not bound by the *Judges' Evaluation Worksheet* and may deviate from it. Specifically, the *Worksheet* may be altered before judging, and the winning school may not be the one that scores highest on the posted *Judges' Evaluation Worksheet*.

It is emphasized that the expectations of student conference proposals have changed dramatically over the past decade. (For example, in 2001 the ANS went back to a single national student conference; for nearly forty years previous there were multiple smaller regional student conferences.) Because of this, the Student Sections Committee has done their best to provide proposal authors with the most current information without restricting student conference innovation to a rigid set of static criteria.

The *Judges' Evaluation Worksheet* can be found on the SSC website, <http://committees.ans.org/students/>, in the "Student Conference" section. The *Judges' Evaluation Worksheet* is updated almost every year, so be sure you are working with the most recent version.

## 4.3 Additional Criteria

There are additional elements, not part of the proposal, that have frequently entered into the judges' discussion in previous years. None of the following are hard and fast rules. Should you be concerned about the possible effect of any of these items on your chances for hosting, discuss them with the SSC Chair, [ssc@ans.org](mailto:ssc@ans.org), before pursuing your proposal.

- 1) Strength and leadership of conference chairs is a key part of the judges' decision. A superior proposal is meaningless if the chairs do not have the ability to realize it. The proposal document is assumed to reflect the leadership of the chairs. However, the judges' personal knowledge of the chairs (or lack thereof) may also be a factor. Further, past ANS and non-ANS leadership roles and successes are considered, especially with regard to Student Section activity.
- 2) Student Sections should be in "Good Standing". Check the SSC website to determine your Section's status. "Bad Standing" can be quickly remedied, but it is best to accomplish this WELL in advance of the proposal deadline. (Sections which are not in good standing for many years prior to application, only to miraculously file annual reports and submit draft rules the week before the proposal deadline, are generally considered to have barely met this criteria.)
- 3) Similarly, the overall activity of the Section is normally among the evaluation criteria. While you self-report your Section strength and participation, this is always compared to the record National has of your Section's activities. It's

important for Sections to file outreach reports and annual reports to document their events with National. (See the SSC website for more details.)

- 4) The conference chair(s) are generally expected to have attended at least one student conference and one national meeting *before* submitting a proposal.
- 5) Student Sections should expect to allow at least 6 years between conferences. (EXAMPLE: If your school hosted in 1901, then your school typically will be handicapped for selection until 1907.) An outstanding proposal may be accepted after only 4 years, but 4 years is an absolute minimum.
- 6) The SSC has historically favored geographic rotation (e.g. east coast/west coast or north/south). This means that the possibility of consecutive conferences in the same region may influence the judge's discussion.
- 7) The SSC has often favored schools which have submitted proposals in previous years. A well-crafted proposal may win during its first year of submission, but keep in mind that previous submissions have the benefit of one or more years of feedback from the judging committee.

## 5. SPECIAL CAUTIONS

A winning proposal requires a substantial amount of advance planning. A well-crafted proposal can cut the amount of work needed to host a conference in half, because the major issues are already resolved and a plan of action has been crafted. However, there are some actions that may jeopardize your ability to host a conference if done too early.

In addition to just generally being bad ideas, if the judging committee hears about your Section doing any of the following before being officially awarded the conference, they will consider it a reflection on the judgment of your conference leadership and factor it into their scores.

- 1) Do not sign any contract before being officially awarded the conference. The only circumstances under which you may sign a contract are: a) there is no penalty to cancel or alter the contract, b) there is no financial deposit required, and c) the person or organization with whom you are contracting understands that they are contracting with a student group and NOT with ANS National.
- 2) Do not approach any speakers about attending your conference unless you have a personal relationship with them through previous activities. Someone who was the proposed co-chair's internship supervisor or former thesis advisor is fine. Looking up a phone number for the current ANS president and cold-calling him/her is generally not.
- 3) Do not approach any sponsors about sponsoring your conference unless they are a local sponsor that is unlikely to sponsor the conference if it is held at a different school. For example, your local nuclear power utility may still be interested in sponsoring the conference if it is held elsewhere, but your local pizza parlor probably won't be.
- 4) Do not make any formal agreements with other student groups, especially other professional organizations such as the Health Physics Society or the Institute of Nuclear Materials Management. Special procedures apply to involving these types of groups in your conference and you will need to consult with ANS National to make sure all policies are followed.
- 5) Do not publish, say, or do anything that might lead an observer not familiar with the conference judging process to think that you have been awarded the conference until the official announcement is made.
- 6) Do not squat on domain names, facebook groups, twitter hashtags, or anything else that the conference organizers might like unless you are prepared to turn it over to them for free when you don't win the conference.