

## **DEAR COMPETITIVE SESSION CHAIR:**

Thank you very much for agreeing to serve as a **competitive session chair** at the upcoming AIB meeting. We are grateful that you are joining the community of volunteers who are absolutely critical for the conference success. The purpose of this message is to offer suggestions on how to chair your session, drawing upon past collective experience.

Session chairs are particularly important in recent years, as we have consolidated the roles of chairs and discussants under the responsibilities of the session chair. While you are not expected to act as a pure discussant, we would appreciate it if you could help to initiate a discussion during the session and provide some integrative comments and/or manuscript-specific comments at the end of the presentations. This can be done effectively by directing the conversation to common themes that cut across the individual presentations, which should also encourage the audience to formulate their own questions.

Below are some **key recommendations**:

### **1. GET ACQUAINTED AHEAD OF TIME WITH THE PEOPLE IN YOUR SESSION**

As session chair, you are expected to contact everyone in your session well in advance – a good time to do this would be RIGHT NOW. You can see the participants in your session on the conference website: <http://aib.msu.edu/events/2018/Program.asp>. We suggest you download the information for your session (you can COPY and PASTE the text into MS WORD) for later reference. Starting May 15th, you can also download the manuscripts for your session by using the manuscripts' ID numbers which are written in parentheses in the detailed program. Alternatively, you can contact the authors of your session and request them to send you an up-to-date version of their manuscripts.

Please check the time of your session and make sure you have it penciled in your agenda.

### **2. ENCOURAGE THE CIRCULATION OF THE PAPERS IN YOUR SESSION AHEAD OF TIME**

Please encourage everyone in your session to read all papers before the conference, at the very latest, on the flight to the conference. This way, each participant can attempt, in their presentation, to link their papers to the other presentations for a more cohesive and stimulating session. I am sending out separate guidelines to the authors for all the sessions, but feel free to email them any additional or specific instructions, as the sessions do differ in length, numbers of participants, purpose and content.

### **3. DISTRIBUTE HANDOUTS IN THE SESSION**

Each presenter should bring 15-25 copies of a **summary** of his/her paper to the session as a handout. These handouts should be distributed by you - the chair, and/or the authors before the session starts, with the extras left at the entry doors so that people coming in to the sessions can pick up the papers. Any leftover handouts, once the session is over, should be collected by the session chair (yourself) and returned to the "Announcements and Handouts" booth at the Exhibit Hall. This will give an opportunity for all conference attendees to browse through leftover summaries for those sessions that they missed.

#### 4. ORDER OF PRESENTERS

Unless there is a problem, please keep to the order of papers, as outlined in the official Final Program. Although we would prefer that people don't "hop" from one session to another, to listen to a particular paper based on the order shown in the program, in reality this will happen. However, we are asking that each presenter remains in the session in which they're scheduled throughout that session, in courtesy to the other speakers, and again to ensure a more coherent session.

#### 5. MANAGE THE SESSION TIME

All sessions are one hour and fifteen minutes (75 minutes) long. Many competitive sessions have 4 papers. That would be 15 minutes for each paper and 15 minutes for audience discussion. Again, since there are no separate discussants, it is important that you give the audience sufficient time to comment. Therefore, for competitive sessions a good general rule of thumb is:

- Five papers: 12 minutes per paper
- Four papers: 15 minutes per paper
- Three papers: 20 minutes per paper

Timing will be tight. Therefore, please do enforce the time limits we have proposed. That is, do not let a speaker run on and take time away from the speakers that follow, or from the feedback that they themselves will receive. Please do not put your speakers in the untenable situation in which the time for the session is up and others need the room, but your session hasn't ended yet (you will be asked to leave the room at that point!) – watch the clock to see that everyone gets their fair share of the time, and the session can be concluded in good order.

Carry a small clock or watch with you and two or three single sheets of paper. You can flag up when speakers have 5 minutes left, when they have 2 minutes left, and when their time is up. Tell the speakers ahead of time to watch for these sheets, and that we absolutely expect them to stop when the STOP sign is held up. When in doubt about the time, tend to err in favor of Q&A from the audience.

Finally, if you notice a presenter becoming highly defensive in response to comments they receive, please try to interfere and move the discussion to another direction. These defensive stances add little to the discussion, and they merely reduce the time available for further feedback to the authors, which is the whole purpose of these sessions. If they wish to continue the discussion, invite them to do so informally later after the close of the session, and during one of the breaks.

#### 6. HOW TO START A SESSION

As chair, it is up to you to start the session. The first thing is to start on time. This is often hard to do, especially first thing in the morning when people can straggle in, but it is important to start on time, even if others join the session late. The second thing is to simply introduce the topic and the speakers. Your whole introduction should take no more than 2 minutes. Try to introduce from the very beginning an informal first-name tone.

## **7. AUDIO-VISUAL EQUIPMENT**

Computers and computer projectors will be available in all rooms. Therefore, authors need to bring their presentations in the form of a PowerPoint file on a USB Memory Stick. Authors have been told to divide the number of minutes they have by two to work out how many slides they can manage in the time available (so no more than 7 or 8 slides). We have advised them of this, but it wouldn't hurt if you were to remind them.

## **8. OTHER SUGGESTIONS**

Meet the participants of your session 10 minutes BEFORE the session starts so that everyone can be introduced, the equipment can be checked, handouts can be distributed, and most importantly of all - so that presentations can be uploaded on to the computer in the room ahead of the start of the session, to avoid having to do this in the time of the session itself. You may wish to also use this time to remind them of the time limits they have, and what your role will be in maintaining order in the session.

It also helps to give your session members your room number in the hotel or a mobile telephone number where you can be reached should an emergency occur. If that unwelcome emergency does occur please let your session members know as soon as possible, and make other plans. Please be prepared for the unexpected!

## **9. NO SHOWS**

In common with other academic associations, AIB enforces a “no show” policy, to maintain the integrity and quality of the conference. This policy requires that at least one author of each manuscript listed in your session must register, attend, and present at the designated session. You can find more about this policy at <http://aib.msu.edu/aboutnoshow.asp> . Therefore, we would like to ask your assistance in informing us if a paper was not presented at your session.

At the end of your session, please report any “no show”s to either the AIB staff at the Registration Desk, or via an email to [aib@aib.msu.edu](mailto:aib@aib.msu.edu).

I hope you find the above recommendations useful and look forward to seeing you all in Minneapolis!

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AIB 2018 Annual Meeting  
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