Sci Comm Academy: Practical Training in Science Communication

About the Program

Sci Comm Academy is a science communications training program offered by Science for Georgia that is made to guide scientists in building bridges across disciplines and out into the greater community. The goal is to limit the frustrations around communicating ideas to fellow-scientists, co-workers, bosses, the media, policymakers, and the general-public. This goal is achieved by teaching participants to frame their message toward their target audience in a way that is relevant, concise, and actionable.

A key feature of these courses is "last mile" content creation: creating relevance and action where ideas can be directly applied. Students are required to participate in pre-course and in-class activities. Students will work with an instructor during the practicum sessions to create community-focused content that Science for Georgia can host on its Science Engagement Platform, an online repository and index of curated scientific content.

These courses are geared towards early career science and technology (S&T) students and professionals and those who want to advance their science communication skills.

Sci Comm Academy Course Offerings

Core Workshop
The core workshop consists of a series of modules that contain targeted activities and checklists to guide participants toward framing their idea in a way that is relevant, concise, and actionable. This workshop is intended to teach the core of science communication using real world examples to demonstrate course content. Participants will create a 256-char headline and a topical outline that can be used build a paper, article, speech, or presentation that will resonate with the audience and drive them to action.

This 5-hour interactive workshop is offered in-person or online.

Sessions in workshop:
1. <u>Share Your Passion</u>: Understand why your topic is important to you so that you can share it with others (30 minutes)
2. <u>Know Your Audience</u>: Make what matters to you matter to your audience (30 min)
3. <u>Getting Started and Getting Organized</u>: Collecting your thoughts into a main point (30 min)
4. <u>Exercise 1</u>: 15-minute small group (3-4 students) session for students to get direct feedback on content creation with instructor
5. <u>Make Your Message Accessible</u>: Basic writing structure to make your prose easy to follow (20 min)
6. <u>Remove the Clutter</u>: Making your prose clean, focused, and simple but not patronizing (20 min)
7. <u>Pull it all Together</u>: Create an action-oriented message (20 minutes)

8. <u>Go the Last Mile</u>: The final module will addresses creating one of the following (as chosen by the offeror): a white paper, a blog, or a plain-language abstract. (30 min)
9. <u>Exercise 2</u>: 30-minute small group (3-4 students) session for students to get direct feedback on content creation with instructor
10. <u>Last Mile (Practicum)</u> - throughout the course students create actual content that can be shared with the community. They will have the option of sharing on our searchable and curated Science Engagement Platform. Interested attendees can also inquire about scheduling a community oriented, slide-based talk, after completing this workshop.

Example Student Schedule:
<u>Part 1:</u> 2 hours (modules + small group work)
<u>Part 2:</u> 3 hours (small group session + modules)
<u>Part 3:</u> 30 mins (instructor office hours)

Class Size: Up to 20 students
Instructor Time: 10 hours (this includes a pre-class prep time for emails to students, and ensuring pre-course assignments are done)
Student Time: ~5 hours (over one day or two)
Total Cost: $2,000

Short Courses (Advanced):
These courses build on the core content and assume participants can identify a message that is relevant, concise, and actionable. In all courses, students will walk away with content, checklists, and/or concrete action items.

1.5 Hour Courses:
- <u>How the government works.</u> Participants will gain an understanding on the basics of the government and effective methods to advocate for the science. During this workshop, participants will outline an effective letter to their legislator.
- <u>Dealing with Adversarial Audiences.</u> Participants will gain an understanding of combative audiences, strong disagreements, and effective methods to rationally react. Participants will walk away with a checklist that identifies possible hostile arguments and example diffusion techniques.
- <u>Effective use of Visuals and Colors.</u> Participants will gain an understanding of how to use colors and visuals to enhance understanding of their core message. Participants will create a summary PPT slide of their research.
- <u>Talking to the media.</u> Participants will gain an understanding of how the press works and effective ways to engage with a reporter. They will walk away with a checklist of do's and don'ts to make a media encounter a positive experience for both parties.

Class Size: Up to 20 students
Instructor time: 2-3 hours
Student time: ~2 hours
Total cost: $500

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1 Hour Courses:
- Writing an Effective Science Blog. Participants will build on the outline created from the core curriculum to write a blog that is informative and drives the audience to understanding and action.
- Writing a plain language abstract. Many funding agencies now require a public-facing abstract for a non-science audience. Using an existing technical abstract, participants will shift the content to a broader audience.
- Writing a White Paper. Participants will learn what a white paper is, the proper components, and how to direct it toward the intended audience. They will walk away with an executive summary and an outline.

Class Size: Up to 20 students
Instructor time: 2 hours
Student time: ~1.5 hours
Total cost: $450

Instructor Bio

Amy Sharma, PhD, is the Vice President of Science for Georgia. In this role she is spearheading communications training and assisting in achieving Science for Georgia's vision and mission. Dr. Sharma was VP of Product for Prediko, a start-up that was successfully acquired by United Technologies Corp. Dr Sharma firmly believes in the power of careful, targeted communication. As VP of Product she translated the purpose of software features into engineering language to motivate developers to build the software product and translated the scientific benefit into uncomplicated terms to motivate customers to purchase and use the product.

She has worked in many aspects of the engineering field: spearheading the development of the big data vertical and managing a $1M annual Independent Research and Development (IRAD) program at GTRI, working as an Assistant Professor in Medical Physics at the University of Western Australia, working as an Assistant Program Manager for the National Science Foundation, receiving political and outreach training as a AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellow, obtaining a PhD in Biomedical Engineering at Duke University, and designing hardware logic for advanced server microprocessors at IBM.

Dr. Sharma enjoys difficult challenges, jobs with overly long titles, developing big-picture product and R&D strategies, communicating scientific and technical ideas to non-scientists, brewing her own beer, and smoking food.

About Science for Georgia

Science for Georgia is a non-profit dedicated to creating a connected, vibrant, and sustainable science community, weaving science into the fabric of Georgia by making science trustworthy, accessible, inclusive, and a foundation of GA's prosperity.

Science for Georgia's mission is to improve communication among scientists and the public, increase public engagement with science, and advocate for the responsible use of science in public policy. Science for Georgia will achieve its mission by offering activities and resources to learn how to communicate effectively and to create opportunities for dialogue in a positive, low-stress, manner.