ANBE/BIOL 356/656 – PLANT-ANIMAL INTERACTIONS

STRATEGY AND CHECK LIST FOR EFFECTIVE SCIENTIFIC TALKS

I. **Clear Communication**

The guiding question is stated
The importance of the question is stated
The message of the talk is stated at the beginning
The whole talk is outlined early in the presentation
The outline is repeatedly referenced to provide mileposts
The talk is aimed at a specific audience
A clear train of thought is followed and involves the audience

II. **Time**

The talk fits the time limit
There is extra time to recover from unforeseen problems and to permit questions
Enough time is spent on each slide to allow the audience to absorb the information
The speaker talks slowly and repeats key ideas

III. **Slides**

The slides have large text, readable in a large auditorium with suboptimal lighting
Each slide makes only a single point
There are five or fewer lines of text on each slide
Text is concise, having only a phrase or a few words per line
Background of slides is light and contrasts with text and pointer
The axes of graphs can be read from the back of a large room
Slides have been prepared specifically for oral presentation

IV. **Mechanics**

The talk is not read
The speaker begins talking with the lights on to involve the audience
The talk has been practiced to refine the flow, message, and length
The speaker does not apologize for the talk or its components
The speaker's voice can be heard in a large hall over the noise of the crowd and projector
The speaker always faces the audience when speaking
Language is free from unexplained jargon and acronyms
The pointer is used as a precise, incisive tool
There are no unnecessary movements or distracting mannerisms

V. **Organization of the Talk**

The introduction is brief in proportion to the length of the talk
Methods are shown in an abbreviated form in only enough detail to support the results
If the methods are illustrated, a matrix, flow chart, or other diagram is used
The format of graphs should be described before focusing on the content
The conclusions are stated at the end in a form to reinforce the message
The conclusions are crisp and concise
Questions, methods, results, and interpretation are folded together to enhance the impact of the message

Pickett, S.T.A., B.E. Hall, and M.L. Pace. 1991. Strategy and Checklist for Effective Scientific Talks. *Bulletin of the Ecological Society of America* 72:8-12.