Graduate Student Professional Development Seminar

Keeping on track, or, having a good online presence without wasting two hours a day on Snapchat

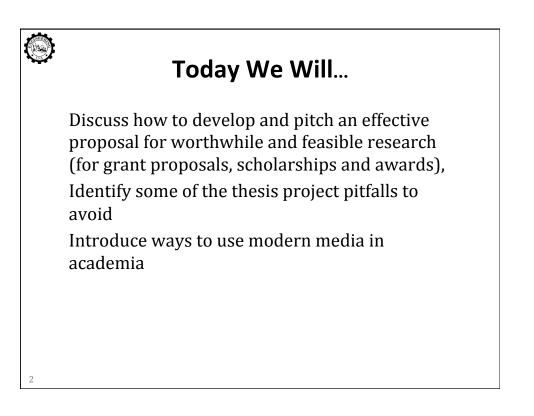
Plans are only good intentions unless they immediately degenerate into hard work

Peter Drucker

Those who plan do better than those who do not plan, even though they rarely stick to their plan.

Winston Churchill

M.G. Lipsett Department of Mechanical Engineering University of Alberta January 30, 2019 http://www.mlipsett.com/teaching/



Developing a Proposal

A proposal is a document that outlines a rationale for pursuing a scope of work, with evidence that the plan is feasible and likely to be successful

Scholarships and Awards

Grants

Other Types

Follow the Rules!!!

Proposals generally go into competitions Reviewers have a lot of candidates to review Non-compliant proposals may be rejected without being considered, or at the very least be penalized for not fulfilling some criteria properly

Give a Compelling Story about Yourself and the Proposed Work

Proposals have several parts

Some are numeric criteria. You can't fix these, but, if there is something unusual about your transcript, explain it elsewhere in the package

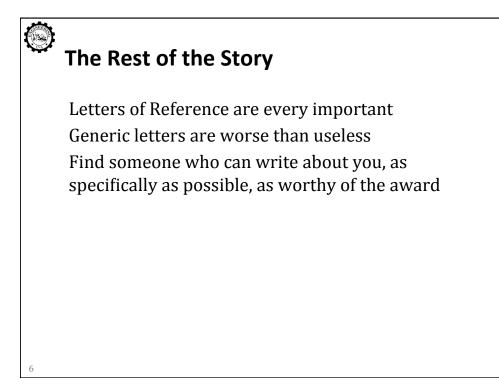
Pay attention to statements of purpose. Along with what you say, there is how you say it.

Sloppy writing, unclear logic, incomplete knowledge and plans, logical leaps, and spelling and grammar errors will make your proposal look very weak.

Have a friend read it to fix it up as much as possible. Then ask a person who has knowledge of the area to give a critical assessment.

Check that you are complying with the criteria.

Submit in time (internal deadlines matter!).



Recall the Project Processes

- Initiating (Setting Objectives)
- Planning the Work
- Executing (Working the Plan)
- Monitoring and Controlling
- Closing

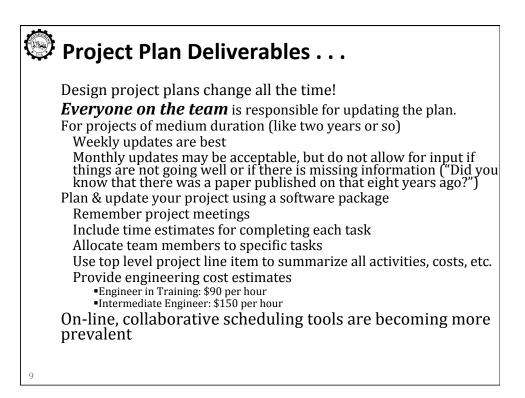
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Project Management Tips

Keep a log book! Professionals must do this!

A log book is generally a bound notebook, in which notes are written in ink, dated, and signed on each page. (If using an electronic method, keep signed docs in pdf.)

Create a baseline schedule to track subsequent time expenditures (sticky notes → software package) Keep reasonably detailed timesheets of hours (design, engineering, & project management). Update the schedule as you see how it's going.



Project Management as the Project Progresses

Update task descriptions and time estimates regularly as your understanding of the project develops.

Contingency (time & money buffers to allow for scope uncertainty) shrink as the project progresses. By the end of the project the schedule reflects what actually happened!

Track engineering/design time and costs throughout the project.

Keep your supervisor regularly apprised of progress. No-one likes surprises.



Pitfalls to Avoid Being overconfident in estimating Procrastinating Allowing distractions to highjack your schedule Perfectionism Lack of discipline in tracking time & costs Not keeping your supervisor informed. Avoiding criticism, and taking criticism personally.

Not being willing to fail.

Media

Traditional publications (journals, conference proceedings)

Websites (institutional)

Professional presence as part of a research group

Contributions available online (papers, datasets)

Personal online presence to show the rest of who you are

(This can be good - or not good at all.)

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Word Processing: What to Use?

It depends.

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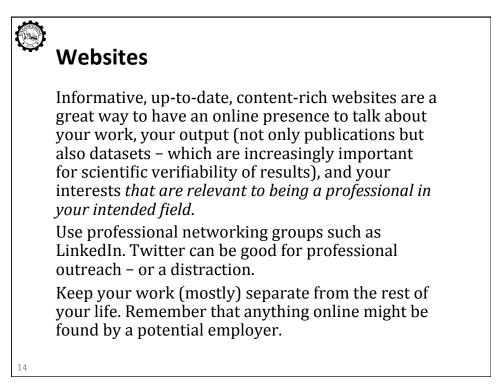
Word & similar packages allow you to see the formatting as you compose. It is simple to learn, but it can be difficult to customize the formatting.

GoogleDocs offers the same versatility – and limitations – but with the benefit of allowing multiple authors to edit at the same time, which is excellent when collaborating.

For custom formatting describing a lot of mathematics, then consider using LaTeX, which highly versatile & can give great results. It is also free; however, it does have a learning curve; and spell checking and grammar checking is tricky.

LyX is a new (free) word processing package that attempts to combine the best of both. Overleaf is a nice collaborative environment for LateX users.

Journals often have Word templates and sometimes LaTeX style files, but not so commonly for the newer packages.



Communication with Your Supervisor & Committee

Use email. It is a legally admissible record.

Texting may be appropriate. Or not. Be careful.

Snapchat is not a good way to communicate professional matters.

Be courteous in your communications. Include enough context so that the email is not misunderstood.

Email lacks emotional context. Emojis are generally not that effective and should not be used in professional communications.

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Meetings with Your Supervisor (& Committee) Meet regularly - the interval between meetings will vary through your program Have an agenda (in advance preferably) Be on time Bring supporting information. Some supervisors like to see stuff ahead of the meeting. Make sure computerbased information is ready to display Keep notes of key actions and decisions - and after the meeting send out a follow up email document Be courteous in your discussions. Disagreements are part of solving challenging problems. It must stay respectful and not be personal. Discussions about expectations should be held in person, so that the discussion can be candid and have an emotional context. 16

Summary Proposals allow us the opportunity to do what we like. A good plan is critical to good delivery, but it is only part of the story that gives reviewers confidence. The plan will change. That's okay. But keep track of changes and learn from them. Keep your supervisor apprised. Feedback is a gift. If you are wasting time, it is not a *personal* criticism if your supervisor points that out and expects positive change. An online presence can help your professional reputation. Manage this carefully, as most online presence is really just entertainment and time wasting. Sometimes we need some fun. But procrastination is the thief of time. And Time is really all we have. This presentation is available online at http://www.mlipsett.com/teaching/