Tips for being a supportive scientific peer/audience member.

- **Listen to the presentation** – be an active listener, make eye contact, focus on what they are saying.
- **Engage in questions and conversation.** A comment can be as helpful as a question. Is there anything you don’t understand? What was especially well done or creative? Do you have knowledge about a related project/method that could assist this project in the future?
- **Give specific comments** – “I wonder if collecting data from both fall and spring would give a clearer picture of what is happening with this migration pattern” is more specific and helpful than “You needed more data.”
- **Be kind and respectful.** Be honest. Treat the other presenters as you would wish to be treated.

There are multiple ways for scientific peers to engage with each other during presentations, including:

**Reinforcing Strengths** – Providing a comment about something that the team did well. Reinforcing comments can apply to any part of the research design or communication. This type of comment can be especially appropriate if the presenter shared something that helped you think about your own work in a new way:

“I was excited to learn about how you controlled for temperature shifts. I’d like to know more about procedure you described, it could be useful in my area of research. Could you talk more about that?”

“The map helped me get a feel for how close the first two sample sites are compared to the other three. It really drove home the idea that land use is important for understanding differences in microclimates”

**Asking a Question** – It may be easy to think of questions for projects that are similar to your own in topic area, have overlapping procedures, or similar analysis methods. Here are some questions that you could ask of any project:

*Worth Questions:* Why was this project important to you? What are the future applications of this project? Who should care about this research and why?

*Methods Questions:* What would you do differently if you were to repeat this project? Could you describe <some part of the project> in more detail? What skills did you learn during this project?

*Next Step Questions:* What is the next step for this research? When this project is complete, what are you going to do next?

**Dealing with Feedback**

What if someone asks you a question or makes a comment that you don’t feel relates to your project? One way to handle this is to ask for clarification. “Could you repeat the question?” “Which part of my study are you referring to?” Another option is to define your project scope. “That is a great question but it is outside of the scope of this project, we limited ourselves to…”

You have spent weeks or months working on your project. It is important to you. Your audience is learning about your project right now. If someone’s question or comment seems negative, try to keep in mind: 1) you are the expert on your project and what you did and 2) the comment is probably not meant to be negative, it is probably honest curiosity. Even if it is not, you can treat it as such. The person may help you discover a real flaw in your project, their comment may help you identify some part of your project that could be communicated more clearly, or it may demonstrate a gap in the viewers own knowledge or understanding. Try to listen, ask for clarification if necessary, be kind and move on. One way to handle a negative comment would be to acknowledge and move on. “Thank you for asking that question. I am going to think about this because I honestly haven’t considered your comment/idea before. Are there any other questions?”

*Modified from NASA, The GLOBE Program – How to be a Peer Reviewer/Poster Session Participant, 2019.*