



ComSciCon-PNW 2017 Post-Conference Report

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pnw@comscicon.org

Workshop overview

This year's inaugural ComSciCon-PNW brought together 60 graduate students and science communication experts from the Pacific Northwest. The 2-day event addressed key issues in science communication and provided discussion and training in topics including teaching, writing, and business.

Thank you to our sponsors

ComSciCon-PNW would not have been possible without the donations from our sponsors. Thank you so much for your generosity and support!

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We also thank Google Seattle for the generous use of their conference space, and the Google volunteers Ben Jencks, Aja Hammerly, Paul Murphy, and Brian Young.



Participants and events

The invited panelists

We invited 15 experts in science communication to speak about their experiences in teaching and communicating science. These experts came from many different career fields and backgrounds, including academia, journalism, public speaking, science illustration, business, writing, and teaching at elementary, college, and university levels. A full list of speakers is available on [our website](#).

The graduate student attendees

Over 150 graduate students applied for the 40 spots available for our conference. Our final cohort consisted of graduate students from 11 different universities and 30 different STEM disciplines, including diverse subjects such as astronomy, chemistry, environmental management, neuroscience, physics, and engineering.

The Write-a-thon event

One of the central activities of the ComSciCon workshop series is the Write-a-thon, during which each student creates an original science communication piece. Before the conference each student received feedback from a group of peers and revised their piece. During the workshop, science communication experts reviewed these edited drafts and provided individualized advice.

Unconference workshops

ComSciCon-PNW also featured a series of unconference workshops, where attendees self-selected topics to discuss in more depth. This year's topics included diversity in science, social media, and public speaking.



We asked the graduate student attendees to send us feedback.

Here are some of their anonymized responses:

What was your overall impression of ComSciCon-PNW?

"I'm still trying to process all of the amazing things that happened in this conference. It was probably the most valuable event of my academic career so far. So very well done - I was so impressed by the organization and the range of topics. Totally awesome."

"My peers had amazing insights and suggestions. I loved being able to discuss something so important to me with other scientists. I left the session feeling like I was not alone and it was very empowering."

"I thought the conference was fun, educational, and overall a great experience. Definitely recommending it to my friends and labmates next year!"

What was the most memorable part of this conference?

"I think the broad exposure to different people's science-adjacent or communication-heavy careers was super helpful for me at this point. Just seeing that a broader range of possibilities exist for people who like communicating was so helpful!"

"One thing that Jennifer Nemhauser said will stick with me for a long time: 'If it's what you care about the most, you have to find a way to honor that, because otherwise you might end up in a life that looks successful on the outside and won't be very fulfilling.'"

"Our keynote speaker by far had the biggest impact on me. Her presentation was amazing, and I loved how she gave everyone a seat at the scientific table."

How do you think you will apply the knowledge you gained?

"I plan to participate in more town halls, outreach opportunities and seek out conversations with those outside my discipline to try to bridge science, art and societal issues."

"I look forward to being more active in outreach with my university, and to thinking more creatively about outreach for grant applications."

"I thought it was very memorable when someone said that teaching (or outreach and communication) should be a dialogue and not a monologue. I'll use this piece of knowledge to be more cognizant of how I am communicating with others during outreach events, but also when teaching undergrads."

"I am more convinced that I could make a career out of communicating, rather than just science. In particular, the workshop has supported my desire to write a book for the general public."

"I want to collaborate with artists of all kinds (not just painters or illustrators) to create meaningful collaborations. I'm a photographer and dancer myself, so I think it would be neat to blend those two sides of me."

"I'm hoping to continue to write (and submit) written work to discuss exciting new research that is published in my field."

"I will be giving more consideration to my place in the academic institution, and how we play a role in changing the institutions we are part of."