



# GRADUATE STUDENT COUNCIL

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## Everyone Can Present: Popular Research Presentation Platform

### OVERVIEW

#### Problem

One common phenomenon of a Ph.D. dissertation defense is that people outside of the field of study cannot understand the content of the presentation. The same phenomenon happens more or less in a Master Thesis presentation or other research presentations. It is important for trainees to be able to communicate the details of their research to the wider public. Suggestions and comments from outsiders can be beneficial to a research field. Doing so would promote interdisciplinary conversations on campus. Interdisciplinary research is one focus of Vanderbilt's current strategic plan. There are no programs on campus that adequately connect our students to the wider public. Because of this, Vanderbilt is missing out on an opportunity to promote our top-ranked institution while simultaneously creating interdisciplinary research conversations. On the other hand, we have noticed that interesting popular science videos can be widely spread across the social networks and that Massive Open Online Courses are taken by students from different backgrounds; both indicate that most people are interested in the research outside their own fields. In a university as diverse as Vanderbilt, with its No.1 education school, top-ranked medical school, law school, business school, and engineering school, each school has an obligation to share its resources with others. However, a graduate student studying at Vanderbilt University for more than 4 years may have known nothing about what other schools' students are doing and why other schools are top-ranked.

One event that has started to address this issue is the nationwide Three-Minutes Thesis Contest that is hosted by the Graduate Student Council for years. It is a very successful event indeed. However, 1) It is an offline event held only one time each year that limits the participants (presenters and audience) of the event and influences of the event. The audience is limited by the people who can actually attend the event in the middle of the day. 2) The presentation is limited to 3 minutes, limiting the content that can be

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communicated throughout the presentation. 3) The focus of the event is to enhance the presentation skills of the presenter instead of spreading the knowledge.

## **Solution**

My solution to break the barriers between different research disciplines is a platform for publishing popular research presentation and a contest based on the published videos on this platform – A Popular Research Presentation Platform (PRPP). Note that the name of the platform does not mean only popular science can be presented, but the purpose of the platform is to increase the popularity of research ideas. The platform will be designed as a website or a mobile application where users can upload videos of their presentations. Considering the high cost of maintaining high-capacity servers, we can encourage users to upload presentations to video-sharing sites such as YouTube. The most important thing is that the graduate students should be aware of this event. Users should be able to share the videos via social networks such as Facebook. The numbers of comments and Likes will be measurements in the contest. Users are able to upload presentations anytime, but the contest will be held only once or twice a year considering the cost. Presentations uploaded within one month before one contest will be evaluated in next contest based on the assumption that one month is enough for a presentation to go viral. All uploaded videos will be audited first by administrators to ensure they are legal and appropriate for other students to view. Another important step is the selection of reviewers for the contest, and the guidelines on scoring. Basically, the reviewers should consider at least four aspects: 1) Correctness, 2) Interestingness, 3) Presentation skills, and 4) Innovation. More details on the guidance can be discussed later. Note that, the contents of the presentation should closely relate to the presenter’s own research or academic area, somehow makes the presenter an “expert” on the presented topic. The final score for each video will be dependent upon both the reviewers’ scores and the video's popularity online. Last but not the least, the winners would be invited to make presentations in the award ceremony in order to receive awards.

## **IMPACT**

The platform will have positive impact to the university on at least three aspects: interdisciplinary research, job marketing, and quality of admitted students.

(1) Interdisciplinary Research. The focus of this platform should not be the contest or the award, but the platform itself, which is a place that graduate students can understand what their friends in other fields are working on, which will benefit potential future interdisciplinary collaborations. More interdisciplinary research projects initialized by graduate students themselves are expected to rise after students’ participations on the platform. Their confidence will get improved, their idea will be spread, and their knowledge will be broadened.

(2) Job Marketing. Those videos they uploaded can also be referenced in their resumes for a job interview, very similar to business pitch videos, which will help impress the recruiters. As soon as the platform

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attracts enough videos and participants, it will naturally start to attract recruiter and companies, which will additionally expose our Vanderbilt students to a larger job market.

(3) Quality of Admitted Students. If Vanderbilt builds a successful social media presence through this platform, then we will start recruiting the best and brightest students overnight. Being the only University with a stellar research presence on social media will make Vandy noticed. As far as I know, no other universities have showcased students' research ideas on social media systematically in such a scale.

## **GOALS**

1. Build the platform as a website or mobile application.
2. Attract at least 20 users uploading their presentation videos to the platform.
3. Invite at least 10 reviewers to score these videos. The reviewers are anonymized to the presenters but would be announced at the award ceremony.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

The first step of this proposal is to group some students and faculty that are interested in this proposal. Then the details of the proposal can be discussed thoroughly. The second step is to assemble a team of developers (better be volunteers) to develop the platform. The third step is to promote the platform through all kinds of Medias on campus. The proposal should be regarded as partially successfully as soon as the first user registers and uploads the presentation online and share through our platform. If it is necessary, a video shooting team can be created to help students generate presentation videos, for example, during or after their class presentation. Vanderbilt Institute for Digital Learning has plenty of resources to guide the shooting process. The platform should anticipate an intense usage right before the final period of a Spring semester or a Fall semester when most graduate students have some results to present for their course projects or their own research projects.

## **ESTIMATED COST**

Domain name of the platform: \$50/year (recurring cost)

Server hardware and setup: \$500 (one time cost)

Server software and maintenance: \$100/year (recurring cost)

Wages for the platform developers: \$15/hour \*80 hours = \$1200 (one time cost)

Promotion expense for the platform and contest (posters, flyers, etc.): \$300/year (recurring cost)

Contest Award: \$500 (First Prize) + \$300 (Second Prize) + \$100 (Third Prize) = \$900/year (recurring cost)

Food during the Contest Award: \$600/year (recurring cost)

Total cost for the 1<sup>st</sup> year: \$3650

Total cost for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year: \$1950