**The Elevator Speech Meeting on Nov. 20, 2013**

*By Dr. Ann Stuart*

**Purpose:** The purpose of this evening session is for each of you to practice giving a two-minute, organized, lucid explanation of your work in order to receive feedback (in a non-threatening environment) on what succeeds in the talk and what could be improved.

**Preparation:**

* Each person should prepare **two talks**, one for a scientist and the second for the (tax-paying) lay person.
* You will be asked to give one of these talks but you won’t know which one until you are asked.
* You may not refer to notes.
* Another member of the group will be your receptive audience so that you will have someone to look in the eye, to convince that your work is fascinating.

**Rehearsing:**

* Rehearse your talk out loud (saying it out loud will help you remember it).
* Video-record yourself (e.g. with your phone). Did you persuade yourself that your work was interesting and valuable?
* Do not exceed the two minute limit.
* How much to memorize is up to you. You will want your interaction with the person to be natural, not stilted. That said, you should certainly remember the sequence of ideas and should choose your words carefully and remember them.

**Structure of the talk:**

* Tell us to whom you are speaking (see below).
* Begin with your name and affiliation. Don’t rush this. You want them to remember you.
* What is the problem you are studying? Why is studying it important?
* What is your approach? Is it novel?
* What would be an exciting outcome? (Or provide some other compelling end to your brief speech.)

**Feedback:**

* We will ask for feedback from the group. We could also have paper available for written comments.
* We will video-record you, attending to the following on the playback:
  + Did you capture the attention of your audience person?
  + Did you convey enthusiasm for, indeed pleasure in, what you are doing?
  + Do you have any distracting mannerisms that you could be made aware of (and try to fix)?
  + Did you make eye contact?
  + Did you speak slowly enough for your audience person to follow you? You might imagine giving them time to form in their minds a visual image of what you are saying. Breathing is permitted!
  + Did you speak dynamically, with cadence rather than in a monotone?
  + Was your talk free of jargon?

**If talking to a scientist:**

* Tell us not only to whom you are speaking but also why you want them to listen to you.
* Examples:
  + telling your Department Chair what you do, intending to impress him or her (so they think you are the best thing that happened to the Department);
  + a job interview by phone;
  + speaking to another person in your field at a meeting, perhaps more senior, whom you just met but who you are hoping might be a potential collaborator.

**If talking to a lay person:**

* Examples:
  + explaining your work to a non-scientist family member who is scared to ask you what you do for fear they won’t understand;
  + or to a random person e.g. sitting beside you on a plane, who politely asked you what you do but at first wasn’t really interested (until you got them interested);
  + or to the high-school kid who says they find science classes a drag;
  + or even to a reporter who was assigned to write a story about your field.