



UMMS Mentored Research Academy: R01 Boot Camp Chalk Talks

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Chalk Talk is to obtain critical feedback from experienced researchers to help shape the aims of your R01 proposal. In some cases, mentees may have different objectives; please modify suggestions below to accommodate your needs. For example, if you want attendees to review your plans to resubmit, send the NIH summary sheet to the attendees in advance of the Chalk Talk.

PARAMETERS

One hour; no PPT slides; have chalk board (dry board) available to write your aims; and prepare to revise on the board as suggestions are made. Be sure your Internal Subject Matter Expert (ISME) is present to help capture the main points of the discussion.

Before the Chalk Talk:

- Send copies of Specific Aims and hypotheses to attendees
- Inform attendees of logistics, e.g., location, time, duration, plan to serve pizza, brown bag, etc.
- Arrive early and write your aims on the board. If you have associated hypotheses, list them also. A simple model to describe your aims may be helpful.
- Invite a statistician if applicable to your study

During the Chalk Talk:

- Introduction: Express gratitude for the attendees' interest and feedback. Ask that when the discussion begins, only one person speak at a time so that you can benefit from all input.
- Present (verbally describe): the bigger picture -
 - significance and rationale of your planned research
 - if you feel it is necessary, distribute a sheet with simple graphs to explain your preliminary data; otherwise refer to data in general, e.g., "...this is supported by data from our pilot tests."
 - a sentence that states your project's long range goals
 - what institute you will apply to and what study section will review
- Present: aims/central hypothesis that are written on the chalk board
- Present: planned techniques and approaches you will use to achieve aims
- Present: access to collaborators and necessary resources
- Revise on board as needed



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DISCUSSION POINTS: Ask your attendees their perceptions of:

- Important problem? Significant field? Potential impact? (i.e., so what?)
- Do aims adequately test your hypothesis/hypotheses?
- Feasible?
- Focused?
- Endpoints defined?
- Some degree of uniqueness/innovation?
- Can aims be accomplished with the resources and time allotted?

TIPS:

- Practice talking, writing on chalk board
- Expect to be interrupted and to explain – questions are good!
- Don't get defensive, try to get the most expertise out of every attendee
- It is okay to think for a few moments before answering a question
- Keep the discussion focused on your needs
- If a particular aim/approach is noted as problematic by one person, encourage others also to address the same issue from their perspective. There may be differences of opinion that will be helpful to hear about.
- You may have several participants speaking at the same time; your ISME may be able to help control talk-overs.

