

Guidelines

Graduate Research Fair 2026

Date of Event: Friday, April 24th at 9am—12:30pm

Participants Arrive by 8:45am

Where: Millennium Student Center, 3rd Floor

Intention to Participate deadline: March 27th, 2026

Final Registration and Abstract deadline: April 10th, 2026

Awards and Judging

- Judging will begin at 9am. All posters must be set up at this time.
- The Graduate School expects to divide posters according to thesis/non-thesis and by discipline:
 - **Non-thesis**
 - **A** (Math, Computer Science, and Natural Sciences)
 - **B** (Social Science, Humanities, Business, and Education)
- There will be separate judging for each category. These categories are subject to change depending on the number and variety of presentations.
- Each poster is assigned to a team of three faculty judges. Judges will have a copy of the abstract submitted with your registration form.
- Students that are awarded 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place in their category receive cash prizes.
- Prizes are allocated to student accounts.

Eligibility

Any active graduate student may participate in the GRF. The Graduate School welcomes research from across academic disciplines. All applicants to the GRF must have the approval of any co-authors to be considered. Applicants presenting a thesis project must have the approval of their thesis advisor. Acceptance into the GRF competition will be determined by the Graduate School based on a review of each submitted Abstract Approval Form (to be discussed further below).

To Apply

1. Complete the **Intention to Participate Form due March 26th**. Completing this form signals to event organizers your plans to present. Information you

provide on this form may be updated later. One form per presentation. If presenting in a group, please designate one group member to complete the form and include all group members' names where indicated.

2. Download the Abstract Approval Form and complete it in Adobe Acrobat Reader DC ([you may download the reader here](#)). Alternatively, you may copy and paste the link to the Abstract Approval Form into your browser to fill it in and save it to your computer.
 - a. Students presenting a thesis should use the Thesis Abstract Approval Form
 - b. Non-thesis students should use the Non-thesis Abstract Approval Form
3. Follow the instructions provided in the form to complete it. Abstracts must be 400 words or less.
4. Collect co-author signatures (if applicable) and your advisor's signature (if applicable) by emailing the filled-in form to them. Please name your abstract file with your first initial + last name. For example, Jane Doe would upload the file named "jdoe."
5. Once the form is complete with signatures and names, you will upload it as an attachment into the **Registration Form due April 10th**. *You must access the Registration Form through your UMSL Microsoft account.*
6. Once you have submitted the form, you will receive a confirmation email from Microsoft Forms. You will be contacted by graduate@umsl.edu to confirm your acceptance into the competition after the deadline passes on April 10th.

Presentation Basics

- The GRF is designed for posters. There are no platform presentations.
- The Graduate School will provide **one easel for each presentation**. All other items needed to facilitate the presentation – poster, backboard, pushpins – must be supplied by the participant. Generally, we recommend mounting your poster on a 3' by 5' poster board. *It is suggested that participants discuss best practices for presenting with their advisors if unsure.*
- Other student contributors should be listed as co-authors on the posters of collaborative projects.
- Posters should be viewable by 9am. The room will be available starting at 8:30am for set-up. **All participants should arrive by 8:45am**. The Graduate School staff will be available for help arranging posters in numerical order by their assigned poster number.

- Posters should be geared for a general audience. For example, a psychology poster should be understandable to students and faculty from the social sciences.

What are Judges looking for?

Posters will be reviewed on the following criteria:

1. **Content:** The research examines a relevant problem; research design is appropriate and compelling; rigorous research methods have been used; conclusions are consistent with the evidence.
2. **Easy to read and comprehend:** Title and author(s) are given; text is legible and limited to the essential; the flow of the poster is easy to follow; the use of technical language or other medium of communication is appropriate to the general area of study, e.g. natural sciences, social sciences, business, humanities.
3. **Attractive:** Color scheme is consistent; lists and figures are used effectively; illustrations and labels are clear; any text is edited for spelling and punctuation errors.
4. **Oral presentation:** Clear explanation of the project in five minutes allocated for judging; the explanation convinces the judges that the work was done properly, the results are significant, and that the participant personally understands the work being presented.

Public Disclosure of Intellectual Property

Your poster presentation constitutes a public disclosure of university and/or your intellectual property (IP), which may result in the loss of foreign patent rights and put a time limit on filing a US patent application. As part of the service provided by the UMSL Office of IP Management & Commercialization, we will read your abstract and work with you and your faculty advisor to determine whether protection of university and/or your IP is recommended prior to the research fair. Please note that your poster presentation constitutes a public disclosure of the university and/or your intellectual property (IP), which may result in the loss of foreign patent rights. As a service, the UMSL Office of Research Administration will read submitted abstracts and provide advice on IP protection. For more information, contact Mike Seper, Director of IP Management & Commercialization (mikeseper@umsl.edu or (314) 516-6941)