

Distinguished Majors Program FAQs

Your research is presented at the Distinguished Majors Symposium, usually held around the middle of April in your final semester. Generally, you present your research in a 20-minute PowerPoint Presentation (15 minutes for the presentation followed by five minutes for questions and answers). Remember you have a general audience. Give an appropriate talk with enough background that they know what it is about.

Professor Demas will provide a computer (PC) with PowerPoint 2007 and a laser pointer. You can have you talk on a memory stick but if it has videos you should check that this will play on from the memory stick on a new machine without problems. Mac PowerPoints frequently have font problems on a PC. So if you have a Mac, check that out beforehand or supply your own Mac. Ideally, email all presentations to Professor Demas by noon the day before the symposium.

Your thesis is due the day of the symposium. Check with your mentor to see how in-depth or lengthy he or she wants it. Some mentors request your thesis to be quite detailed; others just want an overview of the research you did.

The week following the symposium, you will have your one-hour defense. It is scheduled through Cindy Knight and you will need to find a day/time that is convenient for Professor Demas, your mentor, and yourself. It is open to the public. Your defense is the pure defense part of the thesis (no presentation). It is simply a question and answer period (with you doing the answering). You have already talked on the work. The examiners (Professor Demas, your mentor, and any other interested faculty) can ask questions on the thesis and the oral presentation. You will be grilled on your studies and the fundamental issues related to it. Fair questions include what exactly are you measuring with an instrument? What does it mean? You should know the fundamentals of what you are doing and be able to explain it in simple lucid manner (e.g., pcr). But this is not a test of your general chemistry background unless it is relevant to your work. So don't dig out your inorganic text if you are doing biochemistry. It is not an inquisition. It is intended as a learning experience and to determine how much the student knows. It is good practice for the type of oral examinations you will encounter in med school or graduate school.

For more information on the Distinguished Majors Program, click [here](#).

Still have questions? Contact Cindy Knight: csk3a@virginia.edu

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