

Description

Most scientists dread the question–"what is your research about?" as research endeavors are difficult to understand at times. Keeping this in mind, a contest was organized to make it interesting and powerful to communicate research using interpretive dance. The contest, known as Dance Your PhD contest began in 2007 to bring researchers from different areas to highlight their research. More than being a fun way to showcase research, the contest highlights the importance of communicating research findings to non-researchers.

Dance Your PhD Contest

The dance contest was started by John Bohannon, a correspondent of *Science* magazine, in collaboration with the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). There are a few rules to the dance competition. For instance, the lead author of the research should be present in the submitted video. There are a number of categories based on the subjects of research such as Chemistry, Physics, Social Science, and Biology. According to the AAAS, they are trying to capture a broader picture of research across disciplines. Moreover, there are various criteria that must be met in order to win—artistic merit, scientific merit, and combination of science and art. In addition, videos uploaded only on YouTube are considered. Indeed, the Dance Your PhD contest is a fresh take on communicating research!

The winners of all the categories took home a $500 cash prize for their presentation. However, the grand prize winner took home the grand prize and $1000 cash. The grand prize consisted of an opportunity to attend the 2018 AAAS meeting, Austin Texas (including transport and accommodation facilities for 2 days). This upcoming meeting will be taking place from 15-19 February, 2018.

Different Category Winners

Mathematics is usually hard to understand–mathematicians use numbers and symbols and organize them into complex, mind-boggling equations. Thus, it is rare that mathematical research can be set to music. However, this year's overall winner of the Dance Your PhD competition was Nancy Scherich, a PhD student at University of California, Santa Barbara. Scherich is currently completing her doctoral education in Mathematics. According to Scherich, "I think dance is an excellent form to describe mathematics." Scherich further stated that the main challenge in communicating mathematics is to

Copyright: Enago Academy under the CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0 license

make concepts relevant and relatable.

The winner for the Chemistry category was Natália Oliveira. Oliveira studies biosensors at the Federal University of Pernambuco, in Recife, Brazil. Her video was based on a crime and its investigation. This is due to the fact that Oliveira is currently working in the field of biosensors that can identify DNA in bodily fluids, even the fluids that have been washed away by alcohol. She was also announced the winner of the online Audience Favourite Award.

On the other hand, the winner for the Biology category was Monica Moritsch. Moritsch is from the University of California, Santa Cruz. Her presentation consisted of sea stars and mussel population performing a jazz-like dance. Her presentation described sea star wasting disease began to spread in 2013 and 2014. This phenomenon resulted in mussel populations taking over territories that once belonged to sea stars.

The Social Science category's winner was Judit Pétervári. Pétervári is studying at the Queen Mary University, London. She explored what occurs in people's minds when they are in the process of evaluating creative ideas. In her dance video, originality and usefulness were struggling against each other to come up with creative thoughts.

Other Highlights

There were other notable performances in the Dance Your PhD competition. One was the performance of Deepti Mathur from Colombia University. This PhD student used classical and modern Indian dance to showcase the fate of tumor cells that lacked an important gene and impact of drug intervention. Another notable entry was on polio by Chandana Kolluru. The video showed the development of polio vaccine which utilized a dissolvable patch with microneedles. In addition, Ines Van Keer of KU Leurven in Belgium composed a dance that examined parents' interaction with their children. Vanessa Smer Barreto from the University of Edinburgh performed a dance that examined supernovae from universal origins, searching for dark matter.

The Dance Your PhD competition was a fun way to showcase research. Its message, however, is deep as it focuses on the utility of communication with the non-scientific community. Indeed, it is crucial that public gets to know about the research results in order to have a thorough understanding of critical and useful research.

Would you like to participate in the Dance Your PhD competition? Do you think it is something that you would enjoy?

It's time to get your creative juices brewing!

Category

1. Career Corner
2. PhDs & Postdocs

Date Created
2017/11/21
Author
daveishan

Copyright: Enago Academy under the CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0 license