Lilly Proposal Submission Recording 5:18

Hi, I am Todd Zakrajsek, director of the ITLC Lilly Conferences. I really hope you're thinking about submitting a proposal for an upcoming Lilly Conference. Now, I want to let you know that for the proposal submission process, we have a system that goes along with our core values of growth and community. Now at a standard conference, you submit your materials, it has to be in by a certain deadline - a lot of people wait till the last minute - you get all these proposals, they send them out for review, they come back, and then they sort them all out and you build a program. That's been that way for a long time. I know it goes back way before my time, but I can tell you I first submitted in 1985, and in 1985, that was the process.

Not much has changed over the last 40 years. Our conference team got together, and we were thinking about this and we thought we shouldn't be basing proposals on how somebody else does. What we should be doing, is basing them on a criterion, because when you base them on how somebody else does, that's like grading on a curve. And the grading on the curve is set up so that you can have only a certain number of a certain number of As and a certain number of Bs and certain number of Cs, and it doesn't matter how well you do. If other people do better, they're the As and you're the Bs. We don't really encourage grading on a curve at the universities and we shouldn't encourage the same process for conferences. So, we really prefer rather than norm based that we do a criterion based when we're grading. If you score well enough, do well enough to get an A, you should get the A. So, we thought, why don't we do that for conferences.

So, what we do on the conference is we basically use a criterion reference system. Now, once you have a criterion referenced grading, to see, on a rubric, if you're scoring high enough on a rubric if you score high enough to actually be accepted - and present at the conference - we don't need to wait for all the others to come in. As soon as yours come in we send it out for review, it takes 2 to 4 weeks, depending on the amount of time it takes to get through the blind review process and get it back and everything, and then once it comes back we can make the decision. There's no reason for you to have to wait. So, what I like about this is that it can allow you to get your materials in and get your responses earlier. Now, the other thing is that I never liked about this whole process is I'd submit my material and then I'd get a letter back that says you're accepted or you're rejected - never really liked being rejected - but that idea too is there's nothing else you could do. You're just done. So we didn't like that.

We didn't really like the language of reject, so what we do is we go with the growth mindedness. Now in growth mindedness we talk about instead of saying “I can't do it,” you say “I can't do it yet.” “I'm not good at giving presentations” versus “I'm not good at giving presentations yet,” “I'm not good at math I'm not good at math yet.” The “yet” is the growth part. Why not do that too? So, basically what happens here is when you submit a proposal you'll get it back in two to four weeks and you'll get a response of either accept, or not accept yet, and the not accept yet is “It's not ready to go yet.” As long as we haven't hit the deadline, there is a deadline, because some people have to have that to kind of motivate them - I'd be one of those people.

So there will be a deadline as long as you get your proposal in before a deadline then it's going to get considered, and it doesn't matter if it's come in before, so if you submit something and “Can’t accept yet,” is your response, you can take the feedback, rewrite a little bit, and send it back in. Sometimes it's very minor differences, and so the concept there is it gives you an opportunity to actually take the proposal and resubmit, and have an opportunity to present, as opposed to just the one response of rejecting, you're done. So as long as the deadline hasn't passed, you could submit it as many times as you want. You will see that this system is really kind of a neat system. And it's not extensive, is other point we should probably make here. We don't ask you to do a lot of things. It turns out that through the years - I've been directing conferences for over 20 years - there's a high correlation between certain aspects that people typically ask for. If there's a really really high correlation, that means the one piece of information is not that much extra value, because once you have the one piece, you know the other piece. So, our system is really quite simple in terms of a submitting an abstract, some outcomes, some what are you going to do, but we've honed it down to the things that we need to make a decision. And there's not much there, but the things that are there are the critical things to make a decision.

The last thing I want to mention is we need to have some kind of idea where we are in the system in terms of the number of proposals coming in. So, you'll see on our web pages that we have pie charts. The pie charts are set up for each of the formats, so that you can see how much of those formats have been filled. Earlier, you send the criterion in, you're done, it's all good. When it gets later, I don't really like the concept of all of a sudden saying it's full because you might be in the middle of getting a proposal together. So, there is that deadline. So, what we do, is once we hit 90% full, then we stop the process; this newer process we use of sending it back early, and we just turn it into a regular conference system for that last piece. So, for the last 10% of the slots, we wait for all of them to come in, and then we make a decision and then they come back to you. So earlier is better on these types of things but you can submit right up until the deadline. I hope that helps you out, and I look forward to seeing you at a Lilly Conference.