



# A Guide to Planning Campus Events

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This is a guide for student groups planning a campus event featuring a speaker or a panel. The event planning process often takes longer than people realize, so be sure to start early! If you have questions or need assistance, please contact us at [events@heterodoxacademy.org](mailto:events@heterodoxacademy.org).

## Part 1.

### Setting Goals

The group leaders should meet two or three months before the desired event date for an initial meeting.

These questions can be used for event goal setting:

- What is the purpose of the event?
- What sort of impact do you want the event to have?
- What type of event would best fit with campus needs?
- Who is the target audience?
- What would a successful event look like?

## Part 2.

### Planning

#### Preliminary Planning

The best ideas and goals are nothing without proper planning. We encourage you to determine answers to the following items early in the process (ideally in a meeting with the other student leaders planning the event)

- Event topic and working title
- Potential speaker(s)
  - *What connections (personal or otherwise) do the group and its members have? Who is best suited to make the ask for a speaker to come to campus?*
- Potential venue
  - *Estimate audience size when deciding this. We encourage you to be ambitious but also realistic. From a visual perspective, a full venue is better than an empty one.*
  - *What has past event attendance looked like? What size crowds are other campus groups drawing to their events?*

- *How large of a draw is the potential speaker?*
- Event date and time
  - *When making this decision, consult the campus calendar to avoid large campus-wide events and exam dates*
  - *Avoid the final week of the semester before finals/exams*
  - *Determine at least three potential dates that work to invite the speaker(s)*
- Event budget/available funds
  - *Roughly how much can the group allocate to this event? Should more funds be requested from student government?*

## Planning - Action Items

After the preliminary planning, we recommend establishing a concrete plan for the next steps.

- Distribute and define roles and responsibilities. Who is responsible for what aspects of the planning process? Some areas to include:
  - *Event content and format*
  - *Venue*
  - *Logistics and supplies*
  - *Budget*
  - *Marketing and promotion*
- Invite speaker(s)
  - *The more advance notice you can give your speaker(s), the better, especially if they are not part of the university community.*
  - *When inviting speaker(s), we recommend presenting them with two or three date options, noting which is preferred.*
- Reserve campus space
  - *Keep in mind audience estimates and the atmosphere you want to cultivate (For more details about space set-up, see the "Logistics" section below.)*
  - *If you have a specific space in mind for this event, request it by name*

- Create a detailed event budget
  - *This should consider the full budget allocated to the group for the year and any other additional funds the group might have access to*
  - *The budget should be allocated line-by-line with as many details as possible*

## Event Content and Format

Once a speaker is confirmed, students will determine their event content plan. The traditional format for events of this type start with a brief introduction of the group and speaker (~5 minutes), the talk or panel conversation (~45 minutes), followed by time for open Q&A session (~20 minutes). However, creativity is encouraged.

Students will work with the speaker(s) to:

- Determine what topics will be discussed and from what angle
- Develop an appropriate list of questions for the panel moderator to ask
- Develop a plan for the Q&A session
- Talk through any concerns that the speaker(s) may have
- Create an event facilitation plan to share with the speaker(s)

## Logistics

The process for coordinating room reservations and set-up, bringing in food, and AV vary from campus to campus. Students are encouraged to figure out the specifics with their faculty advisor or the campus Conference and Events office.

- Room set-up
  - *How will the speaker(s) address the room? Will they speak from a podium? While sitting in chairs?*
  - *Will there be a check-in or registration table?*
  - *Where will food be served? (Make sure there are garbage cans nearby!)*
  - *Consider how you want to document the event and how to structure the space to be as easy to capture and photogenic as possible.*
- Audio/Visual needs to consider
  - *Podium(s)*
  - *Microphones*
  - *Lighting*

- *Projector and speakers (If using a projector, test it far in advance!)*
- *Wi-fi access*
- Food and beverage
  - *Remember to order gluten-free, dairy-free, and vegetarian options*
  - *Ensure there are plates, cutlery (depending on the food), napkins, cups, tablecloths/linens, and water for the speaker(s)*
- Supplies
  - *What's needed? Does the speaker need any supplies?*
  - *Do you want to include any sort of decorations?*
- Branded group materials, like banner, table skirts, literature

### Part 3.

## Marketing & Promotion

Event promotion should begin early! We recommend six weeks before the event date.

- Determine what registration platform (if any) will be used
  - *Note: even for free campus events, registration/ticketing is a valuable tool in assessing audience size prior to the event itself)*
  - *Eventbrite is easy to set up and for attendees to register on. Eventbrite should be set up to send registered guests a confirmation message with the event time, location, and directions to the location.*
- Create an event poster that is eye-catching and has all relevant details (Canva is a good tool for this)
- Ways to promote the event:
  - *Facebook event and promotion*
  - *Social media promotion*
  - *Campus flyers*
  - *Campus tabling*
  - *Contact academic departments to be included in emails*
  - *Contact Student Life office to be included in emails*
  - *Contact other clubs or student groups to promote to their members*
  - *Ask professors teaching relevant courses to promote in their classrooms (and potentially even offer extra credit for attending)*



- *Contact campus media about the event*
- *Texting extended network a few days before the event*
- *Word of mouth!*
- *One week before the event, a welcome email confirming the event specifics should be sent out to all confirmed attendees.*

### Part 4.

### Execution

#### Run of Show

At least two weeks before the event date, we recommend creating a run-of-show document that outlines the full event timeline, group member responsibilities, and other important notes. Include relevant parts of the checklist above, while adding in a few other commonly overlooked questions and recommendations:

- Notify campus media of the event
- Determine who is greeting the speaker(s) and when and where is this happening
- Are signage or specific directions needed to the event venue?
- Double-check room reservation, AV needs, and set-up plan
- Confirm food and beverage order and delivery details
- What is the dress code for group members?
- How will the event be documented?
- Will there be time for a meet and greet with the speaker(s)?

#### Day of Event

- Send a day-of reminder email to registered attendees or the club email list
- Print copies of the run-of-show document for the speaker(s) and student leaders
- Arrive early to set up event space, food, and test all AV equipment
- Remember to document the event
- Make sure there are enough group members or volunteers for clean-up

### Post-Event

Congratulations, you put on a successful event! Even though the event is over, there's still a little bit of work left to ensure that your group is even more prepared and successful the next time around.

- Group debrief meeting
- Internal event summary/write up: What went well? What didn't?
- Post photos, videos, or testimonials on social media
- Send event write-up, photos, and other materials to campus media
- Add new sign-ups to the membership list
- Create final event budget and compile receipts
- Send thank-you notes to the speaker(s), professors, student leaders, and all attendees