



University of Pittsburgh

Division of Student Affairs

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EVENT SCHEDULING GUIDELINES

Preface

The University of Pittsburgh affirms the constitutional rights of its community members. Freedom of thought, speech, assembly and expression are integral to the holistic development of each student. These freedoms are necessary to foster a diverse educational experience for each student, regardless of race, color, religion, ethnicity, national origin, ancestry, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, genetic information or marital, veteran, familial, or disability status. In alignment with our values as an institution, the University supports student organizations in their pursuit to provide programs, speakers, and opportunities for intellectual conversation, discourse, and ultimately learning.

Guidelines

The following guidelines should assist student organizations as they plan events on campus, including but not limited to inviting speakers. To best ensure a safe and successful presentation or event, please review the Registration Guidelines or seek advice from the Student Organization Resource Center (SORC) or appropriate building management. Please note that only student organizations registered with the Division of Student Affairs are eligible to use University facilities, equipment, and services.

Pre-Event Considerations

1. Event Checklist.

Student organizations should begin by completing and submitting to SORC the Program Planning Checklist and required University-approved contract. University-approved guest speaker contracts are required for all on-campus guest speakers or live performance events sponsored by student organizations.

2. Security

- a) Keeping with the University's obligation to provide a safe environment for its faculty, staff, students and guests, student organizations (hereinafter, the "hosting organization") intending to host an event, including but not limited to inviting a speaker or performer to campus shall anticipate the need for security in advance of the event and must contact the Office of Student Life to discuss this issue during the planning process. The Office of Student Life and the University of Pittsburgh Police, shall objectively determine whether an event requires security, and, if required, the costs associated with providing such security. These determinations shall be made by evaluating factors, such as but not

- limited to, (a) anticipated audience size, (b) location of the event, (c) access level to the event (open to the University community, ticketed, invitation only), (d) the date and time of the event, (e) other events taking place on or near campus, (f) security concerns expressed by the speaker or performer, (g) security measures specifically requested by the speaker or performer, and (h) any similar viewpoint and content neutral considerations relevant to assessment of campus safety, security and service.
- b) Regardless of any other provision included herein (so long as the hosting organization works with the Office Student Life and the University of Pittsburgh Police in advance to permit adequate time for a complete security assessment), if an event meets all the following criteria, the hosting organization will not be assessed any security fees:
1. The event is only open to the University community (i.e. it is not open to the public-at-large to include individuals not affiliated with the University); and
 2. The hosting organization and/or speaker/performer do not have any specific security requests.
- c) The hosting organization(s) is responsible for the security costs assessed in accordance with these Guidelines. The security costs will be used for the payment of Pitt PD or other security personnel and for any associated equipment costs or rentals, as required based on the above criteria.
- d) If the hosting organization has any questions regarding the fees assessed, they should contact the Dean of Students to discuss the rationale for the fee assessment.
- e) The content and viewpoint of the speaker's or performer's message and the community's reaction or expected reaction to the event will not be considered when determining the security fee to be paid by the hosting organization. If the University requires additional security that is beyond that which is assessed above, the University will bear all costs associated with that additional security.

Pre-Event: Advertisement

1. Hosting organizations are encouraged to advertise scheduled events. Such advertisement should identify the event's purpose and the event's sponsors and/or co-sponsors.
2. The University encourages hosting organizations to include the following disclaimer in all advertisements related to a speaker event:

“The University of Pittsburgh embraces its role to foster a diverse educational experience for all students through the free expression and exchange of ideas. The use of a University facility for this event does not necessarily constitute an endorsement by the University of any speaker, presentation, content or expressed viewpoint.”

Hosting organizations also may consider issuing a written or verbal statement that the scheduled event may contain material that does not align with beliefs and perspectives of those who attend.

Pre-Event: Categories

1. Open Event. An event funded in whole or in part by student activity fees shall be open to all University of Pittsburgh students who pay the corresponding activity fee. The hosting organization, at its discretion, may allow other Pitt community members and the public-at-large to attend an open event. The hosting organization also may offer priority access to students, followed by other Pitt community members (faculty and staff), and then the general public.

Recording of the program, whether audio or video, is determined by the guest speaker or event performance agreement which is executed with the hosting organization prior to the event.

For more information about the undergraduate Student Government Board allocation policies, please refer to Section 5B of the Student Government Board Allocations Manual, which can be found at: [SGB Allocations Manual](#).

2. Private Event. Private events are funded in whole or in part by the student activity fee where the hosting organization elects to limit the audience to University of Pittsburgh students.
3. Closed Event. Closed events are not funded by the student activity fee. Under these circumstances, the hosting organization may limit the event to its own members, or an audience of its own choosing, in accordance with the law and University policies and procedures.

Considerations During Event: Participant Engagement

1. *Expression and Dissent.* The speaker’s right of expression and the audience’s right to listen take precedence. While students are encouraged to maintain an open mind during a speaker’s presentation, there may be instances where attendees will not agree with the spoken or displayed viewpoint of the speaker. This notion is why free speech must be protected for every student and member of the University community. Students may dissent peacefully during the event. However, if the dissent interferes with any audience member’s ability to hear or view the speaker, impedes the ability of the audience to move freely, or causes or threatens to cause imminent harm to the audience, speaker or the University community at-large, police and/or University staff may intervene and reposition or remove offending person(s) from the event. Behavior that violates the law or the University’s Student Code of Conduct may result in arrest

and/or the issuance of sanctions by the University. In addition, nothing herein restricts the University from responding appropriately to obscenity, fighting words, defamation (includes libel and slander), child pornography, incitement to imminent lawless action, true threats or solicitations to commit crimes.

Peaceful, orderly, and nondestructive picketing, protests, and demonstrations, include but are not limited to:

2. *Picketing / Literature.* Picketing in an orderly way or distributing literature outside the meeting is acceptable so long as it does not impede access to the meeting. Distributing literature inside an open meeting is acceptable before the meeting is called to order and after the meeting is adjourned. Signs attached to rigid supports or frames are prohibited inside campus buildings. No activities shall impede pedestrian and/or vehicular traffic nor unreasonably disrupt regular or authorized activities in classrooms, offices, laboratories and other University facilities or grounds.
3. *Silent or Symbolic Protest.* Protesting noiselessly, such as displaying a sign, wearing clothing, gesturing, or standing, is acceptable so long as the protest does not interfere with the audience's view or prevent the audience from hearing or listening to the speaker. Any use of signs, prolonged standing, or other activity likely to block the view of anyone in the audience must be positioned in the back or along the sides of the room, if space is available
4. *Noise.* Chanting or making other sustained or repeated noise in a manner which substantially interferes with the speaker's communication is not permitted, whether inside or outside the meeting. Noise making devices are prohibited.
5. *Force or Violence.* Using or threatening force or violence, such as defacing a sign or assailing a speaker or a member of the audience, is never permitted.
6. *Enforcement.* University Police and/or University staff may reposition and/or remove any person who impedes the ability of attendees to view, hear, or participate in the speaker event, or who possibly violates the law or the Student Code of Conduct. Conditions that may lead to such intervention include, but are not limited to:
 1. Any verbal or nonverbal action that disrupts the speaker's ability to present their message and the audience's ability to receive the message;
 2. Any verbal or nonverbal action that interferes with or impedes the movement of those in attendance, or the speaker(s);
 3. Any verbal or nonverbal action that causes or threatens to cause injury to any attendee, the speaker(s), or property;
 4. Any verbal or nonverbal action that impacts the imminent health or safety of attendees, the speaker(s), or the University community-at-large.

Question and Answer (Q&A) Session

All invited speaker events should include a reasonable amount of time for audience members to ask questions. The Q&A session provides an opportunity for audience members to develop and ask appropriate, affirming and dissenting questions and the opportunity to debate the presented viewpoint. The University recommends that hosting organizations carefully plan the question and answer facilitation.

When selecting a method for Q & A, the hosting organization should consider:

1. Whether asking questions should be open to all in attendance through an “open microphone” forum, or;
2. Whether a facilitator should walk around holding a microphone, or;
3. Whether questions should be submitted in writing, which the speaker and/or a moderator would sort, select, and read.

In all situations, the Q&A session should be moderated by a member of the hosting organization or its designee.

Assistance and Accountability

When hosting an event or speaker on campus, registered student organizations are required to comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws as well as University policies and procedures. The University will hold hosting organizations accountable for any failure to comply with such laws, policies, procedures or other conditions agreed to during the event registration and management process. Such potential consequences may include, but are not limited to, loss of funding and loss of SORC registration status for a determined period of time.

Summary

The University encourages student organizations to consider the content of these guidelines prior to scheduling of a speaker event. Such consideration should include student organization member discussion, as well as discussion with University staff. Such pre-event discussion will increase the probability that the event will run smoothly and be a productive event. Additionally, such discussion will ensure that all University of Pittsburgh students throughout their college years will have the opportunity to experience and learn from presentations that represent varied, diverse, and controversial viewpoints.