



A Guide to Planning Campus Events

Written by Daniel Koas, Heterodox Academy Event Planner

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.

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