



## **Students For Liberty**

# **Speaking Events**

Hosting a speaker event is one of the best ways to spread the ideas of liberty on campus. It provides your group a forum to showcase your ideas and attract new members. The following is a step-by-step guide with tips for how to make the most out of your events. Remember that at all times the key is to be as proactive as possible. Take care of details early and do not wait until the last minute.

### **Overview: The 9 steps to hosting a successful speaking event.**

- Step 1: Setting the Speaker and Date - EARLY
- Step 2: Book the Room - EARLY
- Step 3: Confirm the Speaker
- Step 4: Dealing with Administration and Bureaucracy
- Step 5: Strategic Advertising
- Step 6: Confirm Logistics
- Step 7: Last Big push
- Step 8: Game Day!
- Step 9: After the Event

### **Step 1: Setting the Speaker and Date**

The most important aspect of hosting a successful speaking event is getting things done as early as possible. This first step is showing interest in the speaker. You have either talked with the speaker in person about doing an event and now are following up or you have emailed a speaker for the first time to show your interest. However you are communicating with the speaker, make sure it is done early. This stage should be 2-3 months before you are planning to host the event.

During the initial communication with the speaker, talk about possible dates that work for the speaker and different topics for the speech. The speaker will give you times he/she is available or in the area to do a talk. At this point, you want to start ruling out times that conflict with anything else big going on at your school. Major Sporting events, homecoming, school vacations, etc. are bad dates to try to draw a student crowd. Check with liberty-allied student groups at nearby schools to make sure they can attend as well. Additionally, be sure that you and other officers do not have class or a conference you might need to attend.

Choosing the best time depends on the community at your school. If your school is a big commuter school, try picking a time that is right around evening classes while students are still on campus.

### **Step 2: Book the Room**

During Step 1 you should have gotten a few dates that the speaker would be available to do the event. At this point, you want to book the room as soon as you have those dates (and after you have ruled out ones that conflict with other big events). Depending on your school and the anticipated size of your event, you might have to book as early as 2 months in advance to actually get a room. Booking a room about 1-2 months in advance is key. This gives you a better



## **Students For Liberty**

chance of getting the size and location that you want. It also puts you ahead of the game so that you can start advertising as soon as you have the room confirmed.

The best location is one that is close to the busy areas of campus. Book the room for ample time to account for the speaker talking over, long Q&As, and for students who want to stay after the event to converse with the speaker. Additionally, be sure to visit the room if you have never been there before. Make sure the room and area have an inviting and open environment, audio and visual capabilities, and plenty of seating space for your expected audience.

Do not make the mistake of booking a room that is too large for the event. *It is much better to have a smaller room filled to capacity than a huge room that is half empty.*

If all rooms are booked for the first date of your choice, move on down the list of possible dates that you have worked out with your speaker until you have secured a good location. Be aware that other students are going through the same booking process, so the facilities staff may be stressed or have many of the same requests simultaneously. Do your best to work with them and understand that they can either be your best friends or worst enemies – and they certainly will remember groups that are not cooperative. Keep this in mind, and be patient when trying to book space. It may be a good idea to have some candy or other small treats on you to offer them.

### **Step 3: Confirm the Speaker**

Once the location has been confirmed, be sure to let the speaker know and confirm with him/her. Absolutely do not assume that just because the speaker gave you a few dates that work that he/she is still available. You need to confirm with the speaker as soon as the room is booked. If you take too long, the speaker might start making other arrangements. Make sure you get a definite “Yes, I will be there.”

If you are paying for the speaker’s travel, this is the time to discuss travel arrangements and accommodations. Book the flights and accommodations once you have confirmed with the speaker. Be sure to send any flight and hotel information directly to the speaker.

Finally, thank the speaker. Say that you are looking forward to hosting him/her.

### **Step 4: Dealing with Administration and Bureaucracy**

The school administration will have many, many rules that you will need to follow that make your life more difficult. Learn these rules so you are not taken by surprise on game-day. You want to find the answers to such questions as: Can you serve food in the room? How about outside of the room? How do you go about getting a microphone or projector for the room? What is the maximum number of students that can legally be in the room? How do you go about getting extra chairs or a podium? These and many other questions are important to learn beforehand.

Once you have learned the school’s polices and procedures, work with them to make sure you properly requested a projector, microphone, or podium for the room. Again, it is important to do these logistical steps early. The longer you wait, the harder it will be to get the equipment you need.



## Students For Liberty

### Step 5: Strategic Advertising

If you want a good turnout, you need to strategically advertise. You could have the best speaker in the world, but if you do not get the message out there, the event will be unsuccessful. There are five main methods of advertising:

- Media (blog, emails, website, op-eds in school papers)
- Facebook
- University (classroom, other students, professors, department secretaries)
- Flyers/chalking
- Tabling

### Media

*Blogs:* advertise the event on your blog, ask your speaker to advertise on his/her blog or link it to your blog, and get other friends or other student organizations to blog about it. If there are other liberty-orientated groups on your campus or in the area, ask them to post it on their blogs, website, and send an email to their list serves. This is especially important for groups located in big cities and around other campuses. SFL can help you find the student groups around your campus—but it is your job to reach out to them and ask them to advertise your events to their members.

*Emails:* email your member list-serve! Have your allies email theirs as well. Be careful not to send too many of these updates because people will begin to disregard your messages and miss important information.

*School Newspaper:* write your own piece about the upcoming event and tie it in to a central idea. Alternatively, get the school newspaper to cover it. Email your school newspaper and say: “This is an event that is going on this day.” Give them the number of attendees you are expecting. The school paper will either write about it or add it to their “upcoming events” section of the newspaper. Alternatively, you can send a letter to the editor. Begin by addressing the issue and how it is relevant to students, and end with a description of the event. Use the same technique for school radio stations, YouTube channels or other forms of campus media.

### Facebook

**WARNING:** This form of advertising is necessary but NOT sufficient. Student groups in the past have had unsuccessful turnouts because they *only* used Facebook as their method of advertising. Facebook is great, but the other methods of advertising are critical for hosting a successful speaker event. Do not fall into the “Facebook trap” – do not stop advertising just because you made a Facebook event.

Facebook events are an important way of getting the message out there about your event. The best thing you can do is use a browser add-on or a code to invite all of your friends in the school network, and encourage other club members to do the same.<sup>1</sup> Don’t worry about bothering people – your friends who respect your passion for liberty will not mind. For every person who is actually irritated by your promotion, ten more just heard of your event for the first time.

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<sup>1</sup> There are several ways to do this. A Google search for “invite all Facebook friends” will provide you with plenty of options and simple instructions.



## Students For Liberty

Pick an interesting title for the Facebook event. Generally, if the speaker is a big name, you want to include the speaker's name in the title of the event with a catchy topic. For example, "Michael Tanner on 'Who's Paying for Your Healthcare?'" This catches the speaker, the topic, and an interesting question to lure people in.

Be sure that all details are present – add directions to the building, a link to a map, any detail about location of the room, and parking information if relevant. Add links to any publications by the speaker. Invite your friends to the event. Make all the officers administrators on the event and encourage them to invite all of their friends as well.

As you approach the event, send out reminder messages to all the RSVPs reminding them of the event and asking them to pass the invite to their friends.

Do not just stop after you have made the Facebook event and assume that it will get around the Facebook network. You need to post the event on your friends' walls, post it on your wall, make it your Facebook status, post it to other student organizations' walls, and the Facebook groups for each class. Be sure to message the attendees for updates and reminders.

### University:

This form of strategic advertising is absolutely crucial, especially if you are at a big school. Your event will have a great turnout if you do as many of the different types of university advertising as possible.

*Connect with other student groups, both on campus and around the area.* Ask liberty-allied student groups at different universities to send around the information to all of their members. Related to this, be sure you are making close connections to the officers of the other student organizations both at your school and other schools. A good relationship is necessary to cross-promote. Tell them you would love to help promote their events and ask them to return the favor by promoting your events. That way, all of their members will learn about your student organization as well.

Tell them *why* their members would be interested—do not just send a generic email inviting them to the event. Explain that it hits issues that their organization cares about. Remember that you are a salesperson; you have to sell others on the value of your event. Visit the groups in person if possible to answer any questions and help add a personal feel to the event.

*Utilize your university department secretaries.* If your event is on health care, for example, email all the secretaries of the economics department, health care policy, biology, chemistry, and so on. Ask the secretaries: "This is an event that might be of interest to the biology majors. Can you please send them the following information?" Be sure to personalize the emails. You do not have to mention your organization in the email; you can just mention the event. For example, if you are emailing the history department and your student group is called the Economics Club, you might want to keep the group name out and focus on the event, "The Great Depression," which would sound appealing without adding that the Econ Club is hosting it.

This is a very important method of advertising that is missed by most groups. You need to be able to reach into different disciplines and find or create pro-liberty students there. Some university secretaries should be emailed regarding just about any event, such as Economics, Philosophy, and Government/Political Science.

*Utilize your professors and classes.* If you have free-market oriented professors, or classes relevant to the subject of the talk, ask them to advertise the event to their students and



## **Students For Liberty**

possibly offer extra credit to students for attending the event if it ties in to the class. Ask your professors if you can give a quick speech about the upcoming event. During your visits or speeches to the classes, pass out flyers. If there will be free food at the event, mention that!

### **Flyers/Chalking:**

Flyer the campus like crazy. Keep the flyers simple but attractive. Post in classrooms, food courts, restrooms and any other place they might be noticed on campus. Start flyering about 2 weeks in advance. On campuses where flyering is common, you will need to revisit these locations and keep your flyer in prime view.

Start chalking about a week in advance. Keep the message very, very short. Chalk in the quad area, pathways to the major academic and classroom buildings, and other public areas. Use BRIGHT colors—this will catch the eye. In the last five days before the event, chalk at least two times, especially the day before and the day of the event. Be sure to know about the regulations for chalking at your school, i.e. where you are allowed to chalk. Check the weather report to see if rain is expected before chalking since there is nothing worse than feeling like your efforts were a wash.

For both flyering and chalking, it is important to have a catchy message. For an event on health care policy, do not just say, “come learn about healthcare!” Pose a question in your message, such as: “Should the government be involved in YOUR health care?” or “Do you know who is paying for YOUR health care? Come find out. Thursday, September 5, 6pm in Building X, Room Y. FREE FOOD will be served.”

Volume is necessary for both flyering and chalking to make them effective. Get a group of your members to flyer and chalk the campus, and reward the group with pizza afterwards. If your group is large enough, establish a Marketing/Advertising Committee to be responsible for organizing these efforts.

Do not get discouraged if your flyers are taken down. It happens to everyone – you will just have to re-flyer the area. Flyering and chalking are a continuous process, not a one-time event.

### **Tabling**

You should table as much as possible in the weeks leading up to the talk. Ideally, you will table every day the week before. Have your flyers ready to hand out and let people know to come out this \_\_\_ day. See chapter 3 for more information on Tabling.

### **Step 6: Confirm Logistics**

There is about a week left before the event – this is the time to re-confirm with your speaker. Email your speaker and discuss logistics. When will the speaker be getting in? When are you picking him up? Is she interested in going to a social afterward (if you’re planning on having one)? Does he have a particular bio that he wants you to read? You should also mention your expected audience size and the scheduling/timing of the event. For example, the speaker talks for an hour, there is a 15-minute Q&A, and then there is a social. Be sure to let your speaker know of the schedule.

Confirm your other logistics: catering, LCD projector, microphone, etc. Never assume that anyone will be on the same page unless you confirm repeatedly.



## **Students For Liberty**

Determine who will be introducing the speaker. An opening speech should be prepared that introduces your club, including date/time of your next meeting or event, and introduces the speaker. Research the speaker to craft a concise introduction including the important and interesting points from their biography, or ask them if they have a bio they would like you to read.

### **Step 7: Last Big Push**

This is the time to push advertising for the event one last time. You want to do this about a day or two before the event. Blast the event all over Facebook. Make it your Facebook status and urge people to “come out tomorrow night!!” Post the link to your friends. Encourage your officers to do the same. Also, send out a reminder message to those RSVP’d to the Facebook event. Add any details, especially if you are having free food and a social. Send another email to your list serve giving the same reminder.

But that is not enough! You absolutely need to chalk, flyer, and table. as part of your “Last Big Push.” Have your members stand out in the quad area and hand out flyers for the event telling students to “Come out tonight!” Talk to the students in the quad, explain the event to them, and convince them to come out. Have a group of students chalk the night before and the morning of the event.

Remember: successful marketing on campus is all about volume. Usually an individual needs to see a message five times before it sinks in. For every student that is seeing a flyer for the eighth time, ten more just saw it for the first time.

### **Step 8: Game Day**

The big day of the event is finally here! Here are some things you need to do:

Someone should be in charge of picking up the speaker or meeting the speaker.

Plan ahead where this person will park, exchange contact information, and make sure the speaker also knows the plan.

Another person should be in charge of being in the event room to make sure it is set up properly.

Set up a table for your organization with flyers and relevant materials. If possible, have this outside the room but include either an inside banner or write your group’s information on a chalkboard in the room.

Make sure to have a bottle of water for the speaker at the podium.

Arrange for someone to take pictures and document the event. You can use these for your group’s website, school media, attendance records, or just posterity.

Be sure to leave time for Q&A. A timekeeper should sit in the front row to keep the event on schedule.

Make sure you collect everyone's contact information. Do not just set a sign-up form in the back of the room. Be proactive. Have someone at the door asking everyone who comes in to give his or her name and email address. Pass sign-up forms on clipboards around the room when the event starts.

Be sure to give the speaker a thank-you card after the talk.



## **Students For Liberty**

A small gift is not necessary but would be nice (group t-shirt, bottle of wine, school mug, etc.)

If you are paying the speaker an honorarium, make sure to have a check ready to hand to him/her at the event.

### **Step 9: After the Event**

Send a follow-up email to the speaker the next day thanking him/her and saying the students enjoyed the lecture.

Follow up with an email to the attendees the next day thanking them for coming and giving them information on how to get involved in the group. Include things like the topic, date and time for your next meeting or event.

Celebrate your success! Give yourself a pat on the back, and say thanks to your members that put in effort to make the event a success. Debrief about what went well, what could have been done better, and new ideas for the next event. Be sure to write these things down so that your next event will be even more amazing!

Tell SFL about your event. SFL is happy to showcase you and your group's efforts so that everyone can see how dedicated pro-liberty students are. E-mail photos, video, and details to SFL Communications Associate, [kvickers@studentsforliberty.org](mailto:kvickers@studentsforliberty.org)