Policy 8.5
Campus Life Student Organization Speakers Policy

Responsible Official:  SVP and Dean for Campus Life
Administering Division/Department:  Campus Life
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Overview

Emory University, as a staunch upholder of academic freedom, supports and encourages the exchange of ideas within the University community, including ideas that may be unpopular or controversial. At the same time, the University encourages civility and has the obligation to address issues of safety and disruptive conduct. Because student-sponsored speaker events (see Definitions) are the shared responsibility of the University and the inviting student organization, the University will make every effort to meet reasonable needs for security and facilities. The inviting student organization has the obligation to advise the Emory Police Department of any security or safety issues it anticipates at the speaker event. In such cases, notice must be provided to the Emory Police Department as soon as possible, but no less than one week in advance of the event. The University is committed to providing a forum for divergent points of view at speaker events but is obligated to address issues of campus safety. The President, or his/her designee(s), reserve(s) the right to modify the circumstances or withdraw the invitation to speak in those cases where he/she foresees a reasonable risk of violence or substantial disruption of the operation of the University.

Applicability

Students
8.5.1 Campus Life Student Organization Speakers Policy Guidelines

On many occasions, inviting members of the general public to a program involving an invited speaker is beneficial for the entire Emory community. We would like you to consider the following, as you plan your program:

A. Whom will you invite?
B. Is there likely to be considerable interest from the general public?
C. How will the invitation, poster, Wheel advertisement, etc., specify who is and who is not invited? Remember that any form of announcement you make is subject to rapid dissemination via email. Some groups or individuals may be opposed to your speaker or his/her topic and may attend even if uninvited.
D. How will you accommodate uninvited guests?
   1. How will the Emory Police Department be asked to assist? (They should be contacted early in the process of planning any event likely to prove controversial.)
   2. How will the organization leadership respond to uninvited guests or hecklers?
   3. If you anticipate a large public interest, how will you manage a fair and efficient system of ticket distribution?
E. How, for the purposes of safety and visibility of all guests, will you handle use of placards, posters, banners, etc? For example, will you ask guests to leave them outside, place them at the back of the room, or put them on the floor during the presentation?
F. How will you make it clear that your program is principally for the Emory community and is likely to be paid for from student activity fees? The primary purpose of the occasion should be its educational value to this community.

8.5.2 What If the Speaker or Topic Is Controversial?

The University places a very high value on freedom of speech and on the opportunity for intellectual stimulation that can be a product of controversial content. The University also recognizes its responsibility to care about the well being of the entire Emory community. If you are bringing a speaker who may be controversial, please consider the following:

A. Make contact with the Unity Task Force Executive Board, National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI), or the Ethics Center to let them know that the speaker with whom you are contracting may be controversial. The Office of Student Leadership & Service can assist you in getting in touch with these organizations.
B. Work closely with your organizational adviser, the Office of Student Leadership & Service or the Office of Multicultural Programs and Services to seek guidance on managing your program.
C. If you are not sure if your program will be controversial, discuss it with one of the above-mentioned staff for advice.

D. Consider announcing the format for the program prior to the speaker introduction. Tell the audience what they can expect, such as how questions will be handled and if follow-up questions will be allowed.

E. Will you make explicit your expectations about the kind of behavior appropriate to the occasion?

8.5.3 Issues of Student Conduct

If you would like to read a statement about civility at the occasion, the Office of Student Leadership & Service and the Office of Multicultural Programs and Services would be happy to assist you in drafting one specifically for your program.

Here is an example of such a statement:

“Emory University is committed to creating public spaces and campus conversations within the University where we can talk with passion, but with a serious effort to understand one another, our commonalities and our differences on issues that affect the common good on this campus and in the larger society. We invite you to learn the discipline of civil conversation. Civility calls us to move beyond caricatures, stereotypes, and demonization of those with whom we differ. Civility calls us to be respectful of other opinions, viewpoints and beliefs. I would now like to present our guest speaker.”

Please note that there are several provisions of prohibited conduct that would apply to students which could result in a conduct violation. Details of this provision are given in the University Policies, as stated in the Campus Life Handbook. They relate to:

A. “disorderly or indecent behavior,”

B. “substantially interfering with the freedom of expression of others,” and

C. “interfering with normal University functions” (which explicitly includes public speaking).

See Policy 8.1 Undergraduate Code of Conduct or go to:

http://conduct.emory.edu/code.htm

Definitions

A student-sponsored event is any event at which a student organization chartered by the Student Government Association or any other student-controlled group invites a speaker who is not a member of the University to speak on the property of the University.

General public is defined as people who do not attend or are not employed by Emory University.

Related Links
Emory University policies are subject to change at any time. If you are reading this policy in paper or PDF format, you are strongly encouraged to visit policies.emory.edu to ensure that you are relying on the current version.