

college civics

Guide to Hosting a Guest Speaker

logistical planning & social etiquette

1. Prepare for your guest speaker's arrival

- email regular updates including the estimated attendance and your guest's role at the event, as well as the time, date, location, etc.
- reserve a parking space (with orange traffic cones) near the event location
- email or have ready a parking permit for your guest's vehicle
- arrange transportation to and from the airport, if necessary
- give your guest your cell phone number in case of last minute questions or emergencies



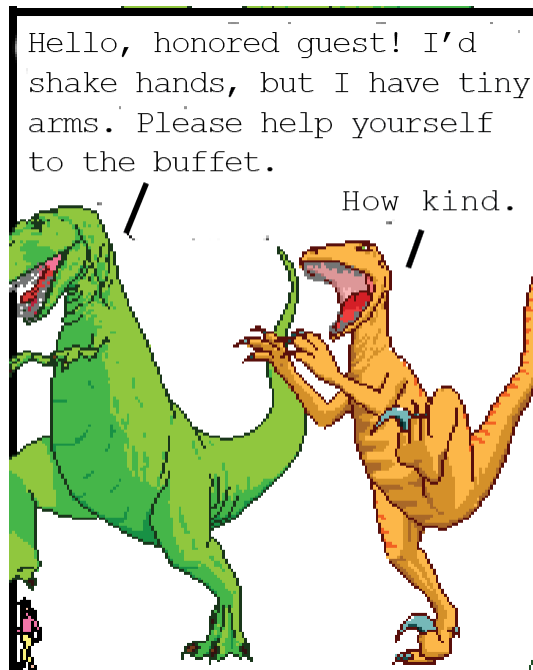
2. Greet your guest speaker

- wait in the parking lot or the airport terminal for your guest
- introduce yourself and your team members
- point out the restrooms
- offer water or coffee
- quickly review the agenda with your guest, including your guest's role at the event and how much time he or she will have to speak
- escort your guest to the event location



3. Introduce your guest speaker

- introduce your guest speaker to any VIPs such as student government members, the College President, or award recipients (handshakes)
- if the event includes a meal, let your guest eat first before the keynote address
- read a short introduction provided by your guest speaker's staff
- state the purpose of the speaker's visit to the audience
ex: "Mr. Smith is here to share with us..."

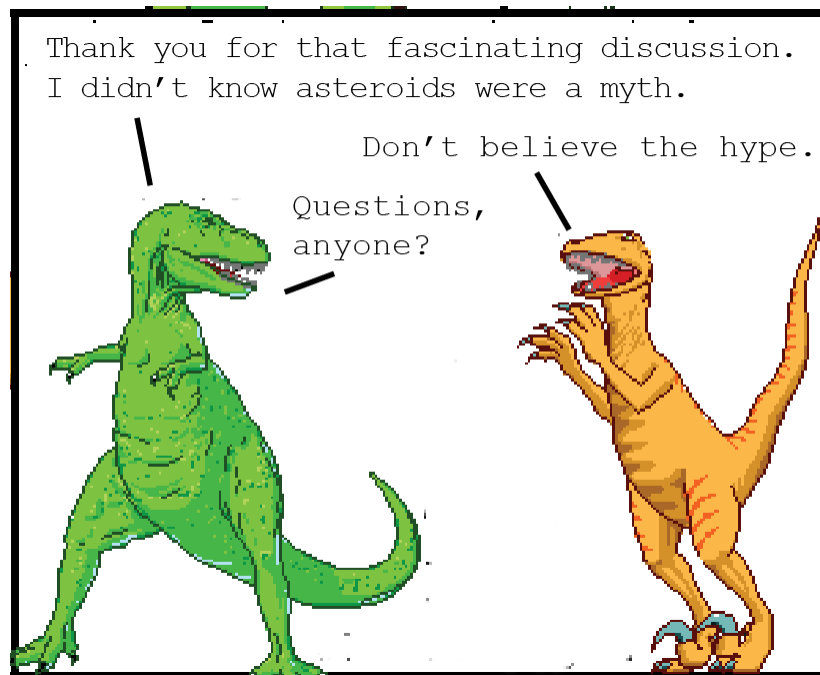


4. Speaker addresses the audience

- when preparing for the event, give your guest a general theme
ex: "make the promise... I will vote!"
- signal your guest to wrap up when it is time

5. Facilitate Q&A

- with 10 minutes left, thank your guest and ask the audience what questions they have for your guest speaker
ex: "Ms. Doe will now take questions from the audience regarding..."
- if nobody speaks up, be prepared to ask questions yourself
- if questions get off track, steer the conversation back on topic;
remember, your guest is a subject matter expert in a narrow field
ex: "These are excellent questions, but let's stay focused."



6. Guest speaker recognition

- thank your guest speaker for coming to your campus
- if appropriate, present your guest speaker with a small gift or award

7. Finish on time

- end the event nicely but firmly
ex: "Thank you everyone, that's all the time we have."

8. Return your guest speaker to where you met

- after the event, help your guest make a t from over-enthusiastic well-wishers and hand-shakers
ex: "I'm sorry, but Ms. Doe has to get to her next appointment."
- escort your guest to the parking lot or airport



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Other Important Tips

Tip #1: Make it worth your guest's time and effort (and yours).

- Your guest official should be the focus of the event. It NEVER works to ask guest speakers to a huge concert or BBQ, especially if it's outside. People are more interested in food, music, and friends than your guest speaker.
- If it looks like your event will have poor attendance, call to inform your guest. It's much more embarrassing to have no audience than it is to cancel last minute.
- It's better to plan for a small event and have a packed house than to plan for a huge event and have mostly empty seats. Be realistic in your expectations, and ask people to RSVP.
- Schedule Q&A time as part of your event. Be sure that your audience knows enough about the official to ask relevant and appropriate questions. If there is a large crowd, you might need a microphone.

Tip #2: There is no event without an audience. Advertise as much as possible.

- Notify the President's Office, the Associated Student leadership, campus media, and the PIO (Public information Officer) that you have invited an elected official to campus. Ask them to help advertise your event. Also ask if they would like to schedule time before the event to greet the official, or for an interview.
- Hang posters, create a Facebook group, use sidewalk chalk, and send all-campus emails (campus staff can help you with this).
- Talk to faculty in ALL departments, not just the political science department. Students in the cosmetology or nursing programs could probably benefit more from a civics education event than those who study government every day. Ask faculty to bring their classes to your event.

Tip #3: Don't let food disrupt your event.

- Tell your guest speaker's staff if food will be provided (or not) at the event.
- Let your guest eat first. Give your guest time to eat while the audience is in line for food.
- Wait a few minutes for the noise to die down, then ask the audience to stay seated while your guest speaker gives his or her lecture.
- DO NOT hold a lecture in the cafeteria; it's too noisy and people will try to have their regular lunch-time conversations while your guest is speaking.

Tip #4: Contact your guest speaker with a plan in mind, but be flexible.

- Have your event plan ready. Know the topic you want your guest to speak on, and the role he or she will play (moderator, panelist, or keynote speaker, game show host, etc.).
- Ask if your guest would be interested in speaking on this topic. If not, could his staff recommend a more appropriate topic?
- Give your guest speaker several possible dates to choose from.
- If your guest speaker agrees to come, get a phone number and email address from the staff person you are working with, and give the staff person your contact information.
- Periodically send reminder emails with an attached agenda to your guest speaker's staff. Call a few days before the event to confirm attendance and answer any questions.