

Event, Rally, Panel/Forum Planning: Steps to Planning a Successful Event

The key to any good event is brainstorming what will work best on your campus or in your community and then, Think Bigger! While you are planning make sure you also think about a budget. Many universities/colleges do have budgets that are able to bring speakers to their campuses.

Define the target/purpose of your event. Are you trying to boost first-year membership? Rally at the state legislature? Petition the administration about a harmful policy? Different targets needs different types of events so it's important to know what kind you'll need before you start planning.

- ✓ Who do you think would be most interested in attending the event?
- ✓ While you want EVERYONE to come, identifying your target audience will help direct your publicity and outreach efforts.

Make a list of committees you will need to plan the event. Committees should work closely with the FMLA Event Chair, Treasurer, Recruitment Chair, etc.

Committees might include:

- ✓ Logistics
- ✓ Speaker(s) / Performer(s)/ Program
- ✓ Publicity / Outreach/ Recruitment
- ✓ Finance / Fundraising

Set your goals! Sometimes there are multiple goals for event. Identify and prioritize all your goals.

- ✓ Think about what you want to accomplish i.e. raising awareness or open dialogue about an issue, public education, obtaining signatures for a national petition drive, raising funds, etc.
- ✓ Are there any ally groups on campus that you would want to co-sponsor the event? What about groups to reach out to?
- ✓ Set solid goals for the number of people you want to attend the event. This helps direct your publicity, media efforts, and logistics.

Make a timeline.

- ✓ Create a timeline outlining the tasks that need to be completed each week leading up to the event, including event logistics, publicity / media strategy, and finances.
- ✓ Make deadlines for yourself, and then meet them!
- ✓ Look at our Sample Timeline on the next page.

Event Planning: Sample Timeline

THREE WEEKS BEFORE YOUR EVENT

- Events Chair should meet with Faculty and Staff Team for speaker contacts and ideas. Think big! Begin contacting people; allow yourself plenty of time.
- Research the issue or policy that is the focus of your event. Use www.feministcampus.org as a resource.
- Logistics: choose a date; choose an appropriately sized venue (always pick a site slightly smaller than the audience expected or a space you can adjust); secure equipment; develop budget for food, venue, equipment, and materials; if it is an outdoor event, is there an indoors back up that can be booked in case of poor weather?
- Secure funding and organize fundraising efforts, if needed.
- Develop your outreach strategy. Arrange for class announcements and begin your first round of flyering/chalking/postering.
- Contact leaders of ally groups and gain their support in recruiting members to attend and possible co-sponsorship.
- The Media Team should prepare a media release and a media list of outlets to contact.
- Use a variety of social media to publicize your event!

TWO WEEKS BEFORE YOUR EVENT

- Confirm your speakers. Sign a contract, if necessary.
- Prepare facts sheets for tabling.
- The Media Team should begin assigning tasks: who will announce to classes, bottom-line visibility events, etc... Second round of flyering/chalking/postering.
- Designate a spokesperson for the event. She/he should begin preparing to answer questions.
- Draft a Letter to the Editor about the event and distribute to local media outlets.
- Continue recruitment especially through social media, class announcements, outreach to campus groups, leafleting.

ONE WEEK BEFORE YOUR EVENT

- Draft sample questions for your Q&A session.
- Buy snacks and make sure your venue is equipped with everything you need.
- Call speakers to confirm. Offer to meet them 15-30 minutes before the event, arrange for rides, etc...
- MEDIA BLITZ!! Go back to classrooms, table, chalk, flyer, and social media. This is the most important round.
- Submit your Letter to the Editor (check media deadlines) or media release. Call your media list and make copies of your media release.

DURING/AFTER YOUR EVENT

- Clean/prepare your venue.
- Be prepared for your speaker. Escort her or him to and from the event, and have food and water available.
- Have a table set up during and after your event. Include sign-up sheets! This is a great time to build your membership. Have information about FMF, your FMLA and its local campaigns, fact sheets, and *Ms.* magazines (will be provide free of charge.)
- Greet members of the media as they arrive. Be available and prepared to answer their questions. Distribute your media release.
- Spokesperson for the event should be prepared to introduce and close the event.

- ****Write thank you notes to all your speakers.**** Showing your appreciation will ensure that your speakers will consider doing another FMLA event in the future.

Note: Under certain circumstances flexibility is critical. You may not have 3 weeks to pull off an important and timely event. Be ready to monitor and adjust your plans accordingly.

Public Speaking

Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance members will have numerous opportunities to develop your public speaking skills. It is important that a spokesperson for the FMLA is prepared, whether in classroom announcements, introducing a speaker, or interacting with media.

Read the Audience, Not the Speech

Never read a speech. A brief outline or list of key points will help you stay on message. However, do not rely on written material. Make eye contact with your audience and notice their reaction.

Use Key Points

Emphasize a clear set of main points. Avoid elaborating on too many details, but use a few strong examples to back up the major points.

Repeat. Repeat. Repeat.

Repeat key points several times. Many people in the audience will know little or nothing about the speech topic, so give them several chances to absorb the message by repeating the main points. Use stories to create emphasis.

Change it Up

Words are only a part of a speech – body language, mood, and tone of voice also contribute to the overall speech. Vary the tone and volume of your voice according to the mood you want to create. Changes in your voice will help keep your audience's attention, and it will help get your message and passion across. Make eye contact and connect with the people in the audience.

Know Your Audience

Tailor the speech to the audience. Key points usually remain the same, but draw out different examples and highlight varying aspects of an issue depending on the audience. When speaking to an organization, know the history and focus of the group.

Cite Sources and Statistics

The use of credible sources, experts, and statistics can strengthen a presentation, but don't overdo it. Sources and statistics should support the message—not make it more complicated.

Keep the Debate on Point

When participating in a panel discussion or a debate, continually bring the discussion back to the key issues at hand. Be careful not to let the debate get sidetracked.

How to Handle Q&A

Use question and answer periods to emphasize your key points. Always look for the opportunity to link the response back to one of the key points to leave the audience with a strong message. Do not allow hostile audience members to monopolize valuable time. Handle negative questions briefly and in a controlled manner, bringing the answer back to the intended message--then move on to other questions.

If someone asks you a question that you cannot answer, you should simply state that you do not know and will be happy to find the answer for her/him.