



Host an Event on Campus!

Events are a great way to educate your campus community about the importance of free speech and due process. The list below highlights some events that students have successfully organized on campuses across the country. This list is meant to serve as inspiration and is by no means exhaustive. There are countless creative ways that you can demonstrate your support for student rights on your campus!

As you browse the events, consider the specifics of your campus, your target audience, and available resources. Keep in mind that FIRE has a number of **free resources**—including various **guides** and **pocket Constitutions**—available to help students spread their message. Reach out to **FIRE Student Network** staff by emailing students@thefire.org well before your event. We are happy to send you resources that will help with your efforts!

HOST A FIRE SPEAKER

Get students interested in free speech and student rights by hosting a FIRE speaker on campus. Check out **FIRE's Speakers Bureau** for more information and to request the speaker who you think best suits your event. You can **submit a request by filling out this short form**. Even if you've never planned a campus event before, FIRE staff will walk you through the steps to make sure the event is a success.

FIRE speakers can help initiate change on campus by calling attention to university policies that threaten students' free speech or due process rights. For example, after a FIRE lecture at the University of Virginia, FIRE worked with UVA's dean of students and within months, the university's restrictive speech codes were replaced and the university earned a **"green light"** rating from FIRE.

FREE SPEECH BALL

To get this event "rolling" you will need a large beach ball and sharpies. Simply walk around campus and encourage students, faculty, staff, and visitors to express themselves by writing whatever they like on the ball. Remind them that **they really can write what they want**, and encourage participants to be creative and have fun. Handing out **free pocket Constitutions** or other information is a good way to boost participation while also using the interaction to educate students about their rights.

FREE SPEECH WALL

Putting up a free speech "wall" requires time and effort but can have a **big impact on the campus community**. Your school may have restrictions on the size and placement of such a structure for safety reasons, so be sure to check the regulations ahead of time. Once the wall is built, select a prominent location on campus and provide markers, paint, chalk, or pens for all to write with.

"KNOW YOUR RIGHTS" SEMINAR

Many college students arrive on campus without any idea what rights they have. Hosting a "Know Your Rights" event can help teach the campus community about their rights and about what campus authorities are and are not allowed to do. **Invite a FIRE staffer** to speak on these issues at length, and



identify the issues that students should be aware of. Invite campus police officers and other campus officials charged with enforcing rules on campus to attend or participate—they might even learn something! Make sure that there is time for questions from the audience as well. A great time to host a “Know Your Rights” event is before a festival on campus or another large campus event. An event like this offers a perfect opportunity to partner with other campus organizations, the office of student life, or resident advisors in freshmen dorms. Ultimately, educating your campus community about their rights will help students understand whether or not their rights are being honored.

HOST A DEBATE

A **debate** can be a great way to get your campus talking about important issues. If your group has the funds and resources, you might consider inviting big name speakers who have opposing views to a campus debate. An alternative to inviting speakers is to host a debate between two opposing groups that are already on your campus, such as College Republicans & College Democrats. Appointing a neutral moderator is critical to a healthy debate and, more often than not, a suitable moderator can be found amongst campus faculty. Reach out to your campus newspaper to cover the event and publish a piece about it afterwards in order to keep the campus-wide discussion going even after the event has taken place.

START AN “UNCOMFORTABLE LEARNING” GROUP

One method to bring speakers to campus is to start an “Uncomfortable Learning” speakers program at your school. **Uncomfortable Learning** started at Williams College with the goal of inviting speakers that hold controversial opinions to campus. Such speaker programs ignite debate on campus and help diverse viewpoints flourish. The goal of hearing different speakers is not necessarily to change people’s opinions on controversial issues but to change people’s attitude towards opposing viewpoints. College campus culture should be one where people feel free to disagree and challenge ideas, not one where listening to different points of view is considered taboo or even unthinkable.

BANNED BOOK READ-OUT

Every year, Americans call for certain books to be removed from libraries and class reading lists. An effective and fun way to stand against this illiberal impulse is to host a banned book read-out during **Banned Book Week**—or anytime during the year. Gather friends, professors, and staff members and select your favorite texts that have been censored and read them in the middle of campus. You will probably want a microphone so be sure to find out whether your school has amplified sound restrictions. Consider partnering with the English and Literature departments as their support can help boost turnout and raise awareness about censorship. Another possibility is starting a banned books club. A banned books club is a great way to engage with your peers while discussing a variety of works considered “controversial” and what it means to have a free society that bans books.

FREE SPEECH MOVIE NIGHT

A relaxing alternative to bringing in a speaker or organizing a demonstration is hosting a screening of a film that deals with free speech, freedom of expression, or due process. To generate turnout, have popcorn and refreshments for all to enjoy. After showing the film, encourage students to stick around for a discussion. Have a few questions drafted in advance but let the conversation flow naturally. Recent film releases include the documentary *Can We Take a Joke?* and *Trumbo*.



LETTER WRITING DRIVE

Hosting a letter writing drive is a great way to flex your activism muscles. Set a date and time for your club or group of friends to write letters to your state legislature, [school officials](#), or Congress. The letters could detail how you and your peers value free speech on your campus and note that you are fighting to protect the marketplace of ideas at your school. You could also ask representatives to support pending legislation that supports student rights, such as the [CAFE Act](#).

KNOW WHAT EVENT YOU WOULD LIKE TO HOST? CHECK OUT THESE EVENT PLANNING TIPS:

- **Begin planning early.** Give yourself and your fellow organizers plenty of time to gather materials, advertise, and gain administrative approval.
- **Build coalitions.** Every student group benefits by having robust free speech rights on campus. It's important to stress this when approaching other groups for collaboration. [Coalitions](#) are great for amplifying the message of and attendance at events. Seek out groups that you can divide responsibilities with based on the each group's strengths. Some student groups on campus are particularly effective at marketing and ensuring that the event is popular, so strive to build partnerships with them. Working together with administrators and other students makes it more likely that people will take notice of your cause and increase your ability to have a significant and sustainable impact on campus.
- **Read your student handbook.** Most colleges and universities have time, place, and manner restrictions on events and may require you to reserve space or submit an event plan ahead of time. In many cases, these are permissible regulations, so it is important to be familiar with campus policies to ensure that your event can take place.
- **Write a press release.** Letting your community know that you are hosting an event will help ensure a good turnout. Draft a simple explanation of the event and send it to the campus newspaper and other local media outlets. Check out these tips for writing a [press release](#).
- **Use Social Media.** [Using Facebook or Twitter](#) is a simple, effective, and inexpensive way to market your event. Create an event page and invite friends to attend!