

Speaker and Performer (guest) Approval Policy and Process
Boston College Division of Student Affairs
Effective 12/20/23

Student Affairs Speaker and Performer Policy

As a Jesuit Catholic University, Boston College seeks to promote an environment of learning, searching for truth, and living in service to others. Essential to this mission is open discourse, dialogue, artistic expression, and engaging in respectful debate across differing viewpoints. This policy supports Boston College's commitment to protecting freedom of speech and expression that encourages the open exchange of ideas to increase knowledge and serve society. Student Affairs departments and recognized student organizations are encouraged to sponsor guest speakers and performers whose presentations or performances will contribute to this purpose.

The benefits of freedom of expression are most fully realized when time, place, and manner are taken into account. Specifically, the right to express oneself freely does not include activity that, in the judgment of the Vice President of Student Affairs or designee, would potentially endanger or threaten any member(s) of the University community, pose a threat to the University's physical facilities, or disrupt or hinder the normal functioning of the University or involve a violation of the Student Code of Conduct. Expression that is indecent, grossly obscene, or grossly offensive is not considered acceptable.

It should be understood that providing a forum in no way implies Boston College's approval or endorsement of the views expressed by the guest speaker or performer.

Guest speakers and performers must be aware that Boston College is a Jesuit Catholic institution and should agree to be respectful of its values and mission. When deemed necessary, specific language may be required to be included in an event's publicity to clarify that the guest speaker's views may not reflect the University's views or opinion. The standard phrase reads: *"The views and opinions expressed at this event are those of the speaker/performer and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinion of Boston College, its employees, or students."*

Time, Place, and Manner Regulations

- Plans for speeches, performers, and presentations must be developed to ensure the guest speaker's right to express her or his views, even if members of the audience disagree with the speaker or find the views offensive. For Boston College individuals and groups who disagree with the speaker or event, the Demonstration Policy in the Student Code of Conduct outlines the process to register their opposition.
- The rights of BC community members with dissenting opinions(s) should be respected as much as the rights of the guest speaker. The speaker, however, is entitled to communicate her or his message to the audience during her or his allotted time, and the audience is entitled to hear the message and see the speaker during that time. BC community members with dissenting opinions must not interfere with the speaker's ability to communicate or the audience's ability to hear and see the speaker.

- In the furtherance of educational objectives, guest speakers should be encouraged, whenever possible by the sponsoring organization, to accept questions from the audience via a moderator.
- Approval of the Associate Vice President of Student Engagement & Formation, or designee, must ordinarily be at least 15 university business days before the event date. This includes but is not limited to, the following: a signed Performance Agreement, assigning individuals to be responsible for various aspects of the event, confirmation of audience type, staff chaperones, public safety, and ticketing parameters. Any communication between the event sponsor and the performer/speaker/vendor before approval should be limited to expressions of interest and availability and consistent with University policies.
- If the program triggers the Prominent Event threshold, as listed in the Student Involvement Handbook, additional safety, security, communication, and procedures may be enacted.
- A group hosting an event is responsible for all costs associated with the event, as determined by the University policy.
- If previously established time, place, and manner regulations are not being followed, or if speech or expression violates this University policy or any of its supporting regulations or procedures, appropriate action will be taken by an authorized University official.
- The sponsoring organization must include the following statement in its advertisements, announcements, and press releases: *“The views and opinions expressed at this event are those of the speaker/performer and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinion of Boston College, its employees, or students.”* In addition, the Vice President for Student Affairs or designee may require that this statement be read at the beginning of the event.

Political Speakers

As a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, the University is prohibited from participating or intervening, directly or indirectly, in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office at any level (federal, state, or local). Sponsoring organizations seeking to hold events that include candidates for public office or their designees must work closely with the Associate Vice President of Student Engagement & Formation, or designee, to determine whether the event adheres to University protocols and standards. In all cases, fundraising is strictly prohibited.

Procedural Guidelines for Approval:

For Registered Student Organizations Events

1. Before any invitation to a potential speaker or guest to campus, student leaders must consult with their assigned representative in the Office of Student Involvement or the Bowman Center.

- a. For speakers or guests that will require payment, this initial contact should happen when funding is being *requested*. Funding will only be provisionally approved until speaker approval is granted.
 - b. At this time, the Director of Student Involvement, or designee will determine if the desired event may trigger the Prominent Event status as outlined in the Student Involvement Handbook. If so, further review may be required.
2. Requests should include the following information:
 - Sponsoring BC organization
 - Desired performer/guest speaker including representing agency, if applicable
 - Purpose of the event, including how the speaker and topic support the goals of the organization and are aligned with the goals and values of Boston College. Please be specific as to the value of the proposed event.
 - Desired title of the event
 - Anticipated location
 - Anticipated attendance
 - Anticipated speaker/guest fee (or honorarium)
 - **Confirmation that the proposed event has been reviewed and is supported by the organization's faculty/staff advisor**
3. Requests should be submitted for approval within the event timelines listed in the Student Involvement Handbook. Requests will be approved, denied, or returned for additional clarification. Please ensure your request is as complete as possible to avoid issues with event planning timelines.

For Student Affairs Department Sponsored Events

4. Before any invitation to a potential speaker or guest to campus, department leaders should consult with their area AVP.
 - For speakers or guests that will require payment, all funds must be encumbered before any approval will be granted and any contract will be issued.
 - At this time, the area AVP or designee will determine if the desired event may trigger the Prominent Event status as outlined in the Student Involvement Handbook. If so, further review may be required.
5. Requests should include the following information:
 - Sponsoring BC department
 - Desired performer/guest speaker including representing agency, if applicable
 - Purpose of the event, including how the speaker and their topic supports the goals of your department and is aligned with the goals and values of Boston College. Please be specific as to the value of the proposed event.
 - Desired title of the event
 - Anticipated location
 - Anticipated attendance

- Anticipated speaker/guest fee (or honorarium)

Grounds for Refusing a Speaker or Performer Request*

- The Associate Vice President for Student Engagement & Formation, or designee, may refuse to permit an external speaker to appear on campus if it is determined that the proposed speech is inconsistent with Boston College's Jesuit Catholic heritage, will constitute a clear and present danger to the orderly operation or peaceful conduct of campus functions, or will violate any of the provisions included herein as well as other University policies, including, but not limited to the Student Code of Conduct and the Student Involvement Handbook. This provision is only directed at external speakers invited by registered student organizations or departments within the Division of Student Affairs.
- Members of a registered student organization who believe that a decision to refuse a guest speaker has been made in a manner that denies their rights as members of the University community may file an appeal, in writing, with the Vice President of Student Affairs. The decision of the Vice President of Student Affairs is final.

***If the AVP is not able to give a firm approval or denial within the scope of the policy, the proposal will be brought to a committee for review.**

- VPSA representative
- M&M representative/Campus Ministry
- Academic Affairs
- EVP area representative
- Dean of Students
- Ad hoc members as needed