EAB

Controversial Events Template

Tool Overview

Purpose of the Tool

Controversial speakers and events are common flashpoints on campus. Managing the institutional response to these events can be challenging because information is decentralized and may not be elevated to someone who can act. This tool provides a formal mechanism to use with campus partners to elevate controversial speakers/events and promote coordinated, early planning.

Tool Elements

Case Study

The case study details how **The George Washington University** uses the controversial events template to identify and prepare for flashpoint events on campus. Use this case study as inspiration as you adapt the controversial events template for your campus.

Discussion Questions

Use the discussion questions with colleagues to establish a process for flagging potentially controversial speakers and events, populating the template, and sharing information across campus.

GWU's Controversial Event Details & Messaging Document Template

The original document from GWU is included on the following pages. Use this template as an example to guide discussions around formalizing risk mechanisms at your institution.

Discussion Questions

Flagging Potential Events

- Who has access to information about potentially controversial speakers and events?
  Consider speakers and events hosted by student groups, faculty and staff, and third-party organizations.

- What types of "red flags" should staff watch for when keeping an eye on events and speakers?
  Consider hot topics in the news, political speakers or events, and previous events that have led to controversy.

Raising Awareness

- How should staff elevate information about potentially controversial speakers and events?

- Which staff member(s) will be responsible for deciding when an event warrants cross-campus preparation?

Populating and Updating the Document

- Who will populate the document?
  Consider university communications, public safety, staff who work with student groups, and students themselves.

- Which stakeholders hold decision-making power around university-response and/or security?

Access and Utilization

- Where will the document be housed? Online? How will users access it?

- Who will be able to access the document? Who will decide?

Event Details

- Event name
- Hosting Organization/Department
- Event Date
- Event Time
- Event Location
- Venue Capacity
- Event website/Facebook page

Event Overview

Brief description of event and purpose

Risk Overview

Brief overview of concerns associated with event. Some questions to consider:

- Is there a potential for protest?
- Is there triggering content?
- Have there been concerns expressed by community members?
- What is the current 'vibe' regarding this event on campus social media channels and word of mouth (are students angry, indifferent, etc.)? What have you heard? What have the student organizers heard?
- Are there concerns related to crowd control?
- Are there concerns about attendees (public or student)?
- Are there concerns related to student mental wellness?

On-Site Staff/Organization Contacts

Include staff advisor and student organization contacts (including president, event planner, and press contact, if applicable)

Access and Ticketing:

Describe how access to the event will be managed (a ticketing system is generally recommended to provide a more accurate idea of how many will be in attendance):

- If tickets are required to attend – how are tickets being distributed, who can acquire tickets, how will tickets be checked at the door, how many tickets have been sold?
- If tickets are not required – how will entry be managed, how many attendees are anticipated?
- Line control/ID-check plan (if student ID only)

Security:

Detail security plan.

- How many officers (and what type of officers – Campus PD or other)
- Any posted rules/policies for event (no bags, no signs, etc.)
- Will officers be doing bag checks?
- What conversations have already occurred/will occur with Campus PD to prepare for the event?
- Is the speaker or performer bringing their own security?

Run of Show:

Provide a time-based run-of-show, beginning with set up and including times for doors opening and doors closing.

Media:

Provide information related to media attendance and related policies for the event, including what media are permitted to do and if there will be a separate space/check-in for media.

Student Organization Statement Regarding Event

Work with the hosting organization to craft a statement regarding the event – this should be their standard language they use to promote the event and/or address concerns, if applicable.

University Statement About Event

[confirm with media relations team]

Media Attending

List media attending

Other Relevant Details

Include if applicable. This could include information related to speaker hospitality, non-student guests in attendance, involvement/potential involvement of other student organizations, or a summary of administrative conversations that have occurred.

Student Support Plan

- What is the plan for student support following the event?
- Is there a need for CAPS staff at the event?
- Have CARE reports been submitted, if necessary?
- Which populations/organizations of students might be impacted by the event?