



## Speakers' Policy

Excerpt from Siena Life Student Handbook

### Speakers' Policy

- A. Brief Overview of the Policy:  
The Siena College Speakers' Policy sets forth the guidelines for bringing in outside speakers and performers to campus.
- B. Reason for Policy:  
This policy ensures protection of discourse and that adequate preparation, review, and notice are undertaken in selecting and approving outside speakers/performers.
- C. Scope of the Policy: Entities or Individuals affected by this policy  
All members of the Siena College community as well as outside attendees at events are subject to this policy.
- D. The Official Policy:
  1. As a liberal arts college, Siena seeks to foster the rigorous intellectual development of its students through a lively exchange of ideas both inside and outside the classroom. As a Catholic college, Siena has the responsibility to promote disciplined reflection on the Catholic intellectual tradition and constructive engagement of that tradition with diverse ideas and perspectives. As a Franciscan college, Siena strives to embody the vision of St. Francis of Assisi by sustaining a community wherein each member is treated as a brother or sister, and mutual relations are characterized by courtesy, humility, kindness, and respect.

Our mission as a Catholic, Franciscan, liberal arts college requires that we entertain a full range of ideas on campus. We have nothing to fear from engaging the wider culture in an open and unconstrained search for truth. Siena should not and does not seek to insulate its faith tradition from reasonable critique nor from views contrary to Catholic teaching. Neither should Siena feel constrained from celebrating and promoting its core values. It is equally Siena's responsibility to engage and debate views in conflict with its core values, so long as the partners in that debate are respectful of the persons whose views may differ markedly from their own. Consistent with our Franciscan heritage, passionate disagreement over ideas should never degenerate into ad hominem appeals or attacks on the fundamental human dignity of one's intellectual adversaries. The challenge for Siena is to remain faithful to all aspects of its mission, especially in those situations when the various elements of that mission appear to be in conflict with each other.

2. To this end, the following guidelines should be observed when various constituencies of the College invite outside speakers or sponsor events:
  - a. As an academic institution, the College has an obligation to promote the free discussion of serious issues which may be controversial in nature. Presentations that have academic or artistic merit, including those that may be deliberately provocative, are acceptable. Presentations that are gratuitously offensive or overtly

and insistently contemptuous of the values and sensibilities of the Siena College community are not.

- b. All speakers/performers must be sponsored by a College office, department, official College committee or officially recognized student club or organization. Any proposed speaker/performer must be approved by the divisional vice president in writing prior to contracting. The generic Speaker Review Form or a customized divisional alternative must be completed by the sponsor and submitted to the divisional Vice President or for approval. The Vice President may convene an ad hoc advisory/review group to assess the risks associated with the proposed speaker. The VP may assign any of these duties to their designee(s). For any speaker outside of the academic or student divisions, the College Risk Officer will work to identify the appropriate VP and their designee who will oversee compliance with the policy in that case. The College Risk Officer will provide guidance to the owner as necessary.
- c. Departments and offices should act within their area of expertise and mission in sponsoring or co-sponsoring speakers or events.
- d. It should be made clear that sponsorship of the speaker or the event does not imply an endorsement by Siena College of the views expressed by that speaker or that event.
- e. Sponsors are encouraged to contact Public Safety no later than at the time of contracting with the speaker/performer for events with more than fifty (50) anticipated attendees to coordinate parking, accessibility, safety, VIPs, etc. The VP or designee(s) may require consultation with Public Safety if they determine that:
  - i. the complexity of the event requires the involvement of more than one campus administrative unit;
  - ii. that the event is likely to significantly affect campus safety and security;
  - iii. the event has a substantial likelihood of interfering with other campus functions or activities;
  - iv. or if the event is a dance or concert, regardless of how many attendees
- f. Sponsors are to contact Marketing and Communications prior to the time of contracting with the speaker/performer to assess feasibility of advertising and marketing of the event.
- g. Attendees may not engage in loud outbursts, profane, vulgar, inflammatory, threatening, abusive or disparaging language or other disruptive conduct or behavior. Persons who do so may be asked to leave and/or subject to disciplinary action.
- h. In extremely rare circumstances, the College may determine that a presentation or event should be modified in format, postponed, or even cancelled. Such decision must involve open and respectful consultation with members of the Siena community including the event's sponsor and must be guided by the principle that the remedy for controversial speech is more speech. Rather than restricting legitimate academic and artistic expression, the conversation could be broadened by providing an open forum after a speaker's presentation in which multiple viewpoints and voices can be heard; the deliberate inclusion of qualified speakers who can articulate alternative perspectives on the contentious issue; or the sponsorship of speakers who hold opposing views over the course of a semester or academic year.

Ultimately, however, the President of the College will have final authority in making these decisions.

E. Exceptions:

The College reserves the right to restrict the time, place and manner of any event that is subject to this policy although such restrictions shall be applied without discrimination toward the content of the view being expressed or the speaker. However, if the content of the speech or actions of the speaker are such that they endanger or imminently threaten to endanger the safety of any member of the community or any of the campus or community physical facilities or if the activity disrupts or obstructs the functions of the College or threatens such disruption or destruction, the College may, at its discretion, modify the time, place or manner of the event or reject and/or cancel any such event. Moreover, any indicator that there will be conduct that increases the likelihood of violence and potential injury may result in the rejection and/or cancellation of the event by the College. Any such decision shall be at the sole discretion of the College