

Rio Americano High School Speakers Forums

The Civitas Academy's mission includes student involvement in the community through service learning, activism, fieldtrips, forum participation and attending speaker events such as the World Affairs Council or the Sacramento Speaker series. In addition we invite the community onto Rio's campus through programs such as Operation Protect and Defend, Academic speakers from CSUS and with our own speakers series in the classroom and in larger venues such as the library and the new Performance Center being constructed next year. These include student run events and events generated through the Civitas office. Civitas puts on two large annual events that draw 250-300 persons during the year. These are an International Dinner in recognition of United Nations Day in October. This is a potluck dinner for incoming families featuring speakers on International issues. In May our annual fundraiser "Pancakes and Politics" is organized and hosted by the Freshman and Sophomore classes.

Putting on a Forum

Forums can be initiated by the Civitas office or by a student as part of their senior projects. Planning should be done 3-4 months in advance if possible. Students organizing forums should follow these guidelines and keep their advisor informed weekly by email or in person.

1. Events and forums are similar to inviting speakers to classroom. Have students prepare questions before the forum. Be specific what you want speakers to address or other concerns you might have.
2. Choose a controversial topic and then invite a panel. The number of invitations should take into consideration there are frequently some cancellations and absences. Create an agenda, with a timeline and format. Speaker presentations may be one at a time or as a panel. Take questions from the audience after a short introduction. Reserve time for questions either throughout the event or at the end of a speaker's presentation. Inform speakers in advance of the event format. For large events make an agenda for your audience to follow along.
3. Reserve room or location through the Civitas office using a Master Calendar Request form available from the VP's office. The Master Calendar Request form is used by Custodial staff for set up. Draw up a floor plan if necessary.
4. Send a reminder to speakers a month before, then confirm with speakers 48 hours before the event. Ask speakers for biographies, select Masters of Ceremonies, and determine technology needs for audio and visual presentation.
5. Send email to invite teachers, clubs and individuals. Determine for number of students per class period to ensure proper seating.
6. Set up and rehearse to test audio/visual technology before event. Check room for correct set up and number chairs to verify event preparations.
7. Have refreshments or water available for guest speakers.
8. Be sensitive to controversial problems. Speakers may need a teacher to step in to solve an argument from a outspoken audience attendee. Students may not feel they have the authority or experience to enforce behavior and protocol requirements.
9. Prepare introductory statements from students presenting to begin the forum which may address why they chose to present a forum on the topic.
10. Send Thank You notes or gifts to speakers.
11. Encourage teachers to arrive on time and seat students quickly to get started.
12. Ask audience in the beginning to be respectful of the speakers. For example, remind audience that expectations are no talking, cell phones, and to give attention to speakers.
13. Thank audience at end for being a good audience and asking great questions.