



Tips for Coalition Building



Coalitions bring together the strengths of different political and social groups to work toward a common goal. While reaching out to other organizations may seem daunting, creating social change requires bringing together a broad array of supporters. A unified message from various student organizations sends a strong signal to administrators, other students, and politicians. Coalitions can be instrumental in hosting debates between prominent speakers or organizing protests and for targeting policies and regulations that prevent students and professors from expressing themselves on campus.



Identify your goals.

Before you start organizing, think about your goals and how you plan to achieve them. If your coalition is focused on targeting campus attitudes and educating students on the importance of free speech, think about how the coalition can help an event you're planning yield a high student turnout. If you wish to target actual policies, see if you and other campus groups can reshape these policies through student government or by working with the university administration. In your efforts to do so, you might be asking for other organizations to support a resolution, sign an open letter, or even help with reaching out to university administrators.



Pitch other organizations.

It's important to be able to clearly articulate your message and make a case for why each organization should be involved. Provide succinct, compelling examples of how freedom of speech ensures that student groups can spread their messages and organize. Explain why protecting freedom of speech and freedom of association rights on campus are in the best interest of *all* organizations on campus. Highlight how organizing an event in collaboration with other groups can increase student turnout and expose others to the ideas and viewpoints the student group wishes to promote.



Seek out potential allies.

Consider how each student organization's mission, membership, or recent work on campus makes them a good ally. Seek out other groups on campus that have hosted successful events in the past and ask the group's leadership if they would be interested in hosting a collaborative event. Reach out to groups that rely on various methods of communication—including rallies, speeches, and fliers—to disseminate their message and ask if they would be interested in challenging speech-restrictive university policies. Don't be afraid to look beyond the student body for your coalition. It's important to work with university departments, administrators, and faculty members as well!

