

## **Common Challenges and Solutions for Hosting Lunch & Learns**

Prepared by

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Due to the recent adoption of Pharm-free policies by universities across the U.S., some dental schools now face serious limitations in regards to lunch & learns. ASDA supports students' right to select and host professional service and product providers for these networking and educational events, and has adopted a formal policy to protect it. *E-9 Freedom to Invite Vendors/Speakers (2000)* states:

*The American Student Dental Association encourages the administrators of all U.S. accredited dental schools to grant ASDA leaders the autonomy to select and invite dental supply companies and speakers to visit their school in order to heighten their knowledge and broaden their exposure to dental products prior to venturing into dental practice.*

A position paper, *The Importance of Lunch & Learns to Dental Students*, prepared by members of the ASDA Council on Education, was written to summarize the benefits of attending these sessions. This document, however, is directed specifically towards offering solutions to students who are experiencing administrative roadblocks related to lunch & learns. There are two major categories of challenges: policy conflict and content limitations. It is our hope that the information presented here will be helpful in generating creative ideas to maintain and foster lunch & learns at your dental school.

### **Policy Conflict**

#### ***Issue: Your school doesn't allow lunch & learns.***

The schools that succeed in hosting lunch & learns when administration "doesn't allow them" are those who relentlessly pursue alternatives. First, ask your administrators to clearly define their policy. This will enable the student leader to determine if there is any "wiggle room" for compromises and concessions. Your school administrators may allow non-profit speakers, or your campus may have alternative buildings that could be used as a third-party venue if lunch & learns are prohibited on campus. Inventive ideas and creative problem solving can curtail some of your chapter's frustrations.

#### ***Issue: Your school will only allow non-profit speakers at lunch & learns.***

Many specialty dental organizations jump at the chance for face time with students. Organizations from AAOMS (American Academy of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeons) to the other ASDA (American Society of Dental Anesthesiologists) offer lunch & learn reimbursement programs. Understandably, these groups may limit your membership involvement if the students are not interested, but the opportunity still provides a regular meeting place for the local ASDA chapter members to meet.

***Issue: Your school administrators require lunch & learn speakers to sign an agreement.***

Attached in the appendix is a sample agreement used by many ASDA chapters that host frequent and successful lunch & learns. Even if your school does not mandate this policy, it is a great practice to record and document these events in case your school's policy changes in the future. By signing the agreement, all parties are held accountable for the information presented. For each lunch & learn, make sure your chapter assigns one contact person responsible for ensuring that the company's presentation is ethical.

***Issue: Your school does not allow vendors to directly purchase food for your group.***

Rather than allowing a vendor to directly purchase lunch and bring it to an event, ask the organization to make a "charitable donation" to your ASDA chapter in a pre-determined sum. This allows the ASDA chapter to handle the food arrangements, advertisements, and reserving space for the event – something that many universities require. It is the school that determines the costs associated with hosting the lunch & learn based on the number of students who will attend, the price of lunch, etc. Some schools only have one price option for the vendor, while others have set up different levels of donation (i.e. Silver, Gold, and Platinum) and allow the vendor to choose a specific level. The Silver, for example, would be the least expensive option (usually pizza) while the Platinum level would include a hot lunch, or a lunch combo from a local café.

**Content Limitations**

***Issue: Your school doesn't allow vendors/speakers to distribute samples.***

This is a common challenge. Per the Pharm-free regulations, "no exchange of products or services can be given to students." A solution to this problem is to create a written contract that each vendor can sign in advance, stating that the vendor agrees not to distribute any of the company's products to the students. Sharing this signed agreement with your school administration prior to the lunch & learn would put your concerned administrator at ease, knowing that no product distribution is taking place. Most importantly, it clarifies that the lunch & learn's first priority is to be an educational experience. Though this document may not be legally binding, it does take the accountability from your ASDA chapter. In the case that the vendor distributes sample products, chapters can claim breach of contract and refuse to host the vendor in the future.

***Issue: Your school doesn't allow companies to "advertise" their products.***

To prevent vendors from speaking directly about their products, pricing, or brand, invite them to lecture at the University as "experts" in particular fields of interest rather than as sales people. Instruct them to educate dental students on the science behind their products, and pre-screen their presentation to ensure that all product or brand identifiers have been removed. For example, if a loupe company would like to sponsor a lunch & learn, they should not come in to advertise their loupes;

however, they may come in and explain how loupes are beneficial to dentists and explain magnification, working distance, field of view, etc. A toothpaste company may come in and explain the benefits of certain ingredients and the method of action, but they should not give a sales pitch for their product. Always stress the educational aspect of the lunch & learn and share with the vendor the strict guidelines put in place by administrators.