

Retired Faculty-Staff Association

Speaker Series Interest Group Job Description

This interest group was created to appeal more broadly to RFSA members. It is a combination and redefinition of the Discussion and Finance Interest Groups and allows for speakers and topics of a broader and more interdisciplinary nature. This group plans to have up to six meetings per year, distributed between financial and investment topics, discussion topics, and interdisciplinary topics. The philosophy and activities of the group will continue to evolve based on events and member feedback.

Responsibilities of the Chair/Co-Chairs include:

- Coordinating dates for the various topics and speakers.
- Reserving space for the meeting, traditionally held in the meeting room of one of the Austin Public Library branches. The Howson Branch Library meeting room is usually used, and meetings are generally held on the second Wednesday of the month, from September to May. Take special care to avoid potential conflicts, such as with elections and holidays.
- Deciding on a speaker for the meeting; contacting that speaker and confirming availability; ascertaining any special equipment requests and availability in the venue.
- Preparing a description of the speaker and topic. That description, date, time and location will be sent to the entire membership by Carol Barrett and posted on the RFSA online calendar.
- Hosting the event. This includes setting up the meeting room, setting up any equipment requested, introducing the speaker, taking photographs, resetting the room after the event, and sending photos for use on the RFSA website.
- Writing a summary of events, including photos, for the RFSA Magazine.
- Attending RFSA Board meetings.

For the Finance meetings:

The Chair should watch for potential speakers via newspapers, TV, radio, Internet, email, member suggestions, etc. It is important to analyze potential speakers for suitability, to be sure they focus on general topics, and to avoid sales pitches when choosing speakers. Some speakers from larger companies (e.g. Schwab) have to get company permission to speak, and then must stick to “approved presentations” which tend to be “canned”. Speakers from smaller companies, from UT, or not from large corporations have more freedom to define topics but that should

always be done in cooperation with the Chair.

It is a good idea to ask scheduled speakers for a short bio and summary of their talk before sending out meeting notices to RFSA members. Also advise speakers on how to connect their computer to the room's display system. Most though not all speakers now use computers. Have them arrive early enough to make sure it works.

The Chair sometimes must respond to occasional calls or emails from members who ask questions or suggest speakers. Several good speakers have been suggested by members.

Finally, always take a bottle of wine for Carl Stuart! He likes pinot noir.

For the Interdisciplinary and Discussion meetings:

Similar to the duties for Finance meetings, the Chairs are responsible for finding and inviting appropriate speakers. There are multiple topics in the news or in current events. Also, members at one session may suggest future areas of interest. Once a subject is identified, the Chairs frequently brainstorm names of speakers. Also, one potential source of willing guests is the UT Experts list on the UT Austin website. The list is maintained by the UT office of communication.

Having contacted a potential speaker who is willing and available for the meeting date, the Chair needs to explain the level of detail that the attendees will expect. Often, it is advisable to choose individuals who have considerable teaching or speaking experience and can comfortably relate to a general audience.

Hosting the meeting involves welcoming attendees, making any relevant announcements about upcoming RFSA activities, and introducing the speaker. It is useful to have a couple of comments or questions in mind if the audience seems reluctant to engage. This is rarely a problem since most meetings have plenty of spontaneous interactions.

Updated 2023