

Faculty Appreciation Dinner: Vision, Perspective, and Finances

Big vision: The Faculty Appreciation Dinner is an easy way to step into the world of professors. God can use you to reach professors to change the world. Your ministry will be stronger and better with professors involved.

I. Who, What, When, Where, & Why

1. Student ownership and leadership is the key to making this happen. It takes a group of 4-5 students who are capable of leading, and who really own the idea. Generally your best students are the ones who are naturally good with professors. They will love this idea, and they are the best ones to run with it.

- NOTE: If this stays at the “staff level” expect to cancel the event or have a minimal turnout. You need students to stand up at the weekly meeting, all excited about how a professor said “yes” to their invite. You need students in small groups encouraging everyone to bring a prof, etc. Expect students to get even more excited about this idea than the staff. Find the right students to lead it and it will fly.
- Don’t get professors or administration to run this. The power is in the students. When a student looks a prof in the eye and says, “I appreciate you” the event has far more power than you, another professor, or administrator will ever bring to it.

2. Timing and location is very important. We’ve found that the time between 5:30-7:00 p.m., and a classy location on campus is best. Students can swing by their professor’s office to walk over to the event, and professors can get home for the evening and don’t have to waste a night on campus. Cost is a factor but you want a nice, sit-down, “tablecloth” sort of venue. Can you do pizza for lunch? Yes – it just won’t have any class.

3. Speakers. It’s natural to think, “We need a big name speaker.” But we’ve found that students are the best speakers. They can do no wrong in the professors’ minds. A “hired gun” speaker makes it feel like a program, and that’s not what professors want.

- Remember: The power of the event is a bunch of kids saying “thanks.” We can coach you in this and give you some sample “talks” from students, but basically you need a couple of mature students – good academically and good on their feet. Plus, students swell with pride as they see their fellow peers address all of these professors.

4. Why is this worth doing? It builds faith in your students. This is scary, *trust-the-Lord* sort of stuff. When they see God use them and it builds their faith, and it begins to paint the picture for your students: “God can use me to reach out to all of my professors.”

- This newfound confidence could very well open up opportunities for students to tell their personal stories to professors.
- The FAD helps build group unity amongst the students. Together they did something faith-stretching. When your students look around the room and see 50 profs gathered to hear them say “thanks” they will be excited.

- The FAD potentially positions CRU (and Faculty Commons) in a new light in professor's eyes
- This is a great way to make connections for a student-faculty CRU at your school and build a whole campus "student + prof" CRU movement.

5. Will Faculty Commons help? Absolutely. We will have all of the "how tos" available on line. We will have the invitation/graphics/brochures. We will gladly help coach you, your team, and your students. We are willing to come to your campus to cast vision.

II. Money: The FAD doesn't cost a lot, but in order to do it well you will need to invest some money.

1. The first cost is the meals. We want students to be able to look professors in the face and say "Would you be my guest for dinner?" This type of invitation implies the student pays. Here are various ways to handle this expense:

- Option #1: The student pays for the cost of one dinner—for their professor. You pay for the student's meal. The easiest way to get students to pay for their professor is to enable them to swipe their meal card. This seems to be an easy option at most schools. If you can't make the card idea work a student is generally willing, and able, to pay for the cost of one nice meal.
- Option #2: The local team budget provides funding to cover the cost of the student meals (50 students x \$25 = \$1250). You raise enough money to cover all of the meals for everyone. Honestly, this event is a relatively easy money raiser. Donors love the idea. For \$50 they can put a world-class professor in a seat with a CRU leader, which for most donors is a worthwhile investment.
- Option 3: Ask students to pay for both themselves and their professor guest. If they can't afford this, then you help by providing their meal. Obviously we don't want students to bail because of the cost so we think options 1 and 2 are better.

2. Gifts of appreciation. In an effort to add class and clout to the evening we propose giving away something that's meaningful.

- At Duke we gave away five \$100 gift certificates to the nicest restaurant in town so that a prof could take a husband/wife/friend out to a nice meal, on us. We had a random drawing for these five gift certificates and capped the evening by giving away the certificates. It was a huge winner. In fact, one professor ended up using the gift to treat the student who invited her to dinner!

Can you do the event and not give anything away? Sure. It just won't have the same "punch." Could you give five gift certificates of \$50? Sure. It just wouldn't have the same punch. Could you give away old books from your bookstore? You get the point.

3. Printing. There is minimal printing expense for the rest of the event: invites, etc. So, total budget to print, decorate, give away some gift certificates, meals, etc. is in the \$1500-\$2000 range, depending on how many attend the event.

- Ask one or two key donors to underwrite it. Our experience found that donors love this idea.

For more information and all the stuff you need visit: www.cruprof.wordpress.com