

A FACILITATOR'S
GUIDE TO

SEX IN THE DARK:

A GLOW-IN-THE-DARK
SEXPERT PANEL

COMPILED BY:

AVA MARINELLI & MIA TRENTADUE,
COMMUNICATIONS GRADUATE ASSISTANTS



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Program Justification	
Program Goals & Objectives	
Program Partners	
Program Evaluation	
Keys to Success	
Planning the Program	3
Implementation Steps & Timeline	
Program Materials	
Budget and Costs	
Marketing and Other Tools	8
Marketing Tools	
Program Acceptability	
Implementation at Smaller Schools	12



Executive Summary

Sex in the Dark (SITD) is a unique Q&A panel that brings together sexual health experts—sexperts—from a variety of public health-related disciplines to answer students' anonymous questions about sexual health and relationships. The mission of this program is to provide students with a safe, interactive, and informed space to explore their most intimate questions.

Students write their questions down on index cards and place them in a box prior to the panel discussion. As the name infers, *SITD* takes place with the lights off to foster a sense of anonymity during the Q&A. To provide additional resources to students, Boston University also organizes a small resource fair to feature campus and community organizations that support sexual well-being. Student leaders also perform “skits in the dark” at the beginning of the Q&A to model enthusiastic consent and highlight sexual communication skills for their peers. Skit topics have included: active consent, STI disclosure, supporting friends who've experienced trauma or abuse, navigating relationship issues, conversing about gender and sexual identity, and negotiating contraception use.

This *Facilitator's Guide to Sex in the Dark: A Glow-in-the-Dark Sexpert Panel* includes the goals of the event, steps for implementing *SITD* at other schools (including budget and marketing considerations), and adaption tips for smaller campuses.

Program Justification

Many college students arrive to campus without having received comprehensive sex education in high school (CDC, 2015; Guttmacher Institute, 2016). What's more, many young people receive misinformation about sex through digital media and other informal sources, such as their parents and peers (Guttmacher Institute, 2016; Garcia, Lechner, Frerich, Lust, & Eisenberg, 2014). Since students may feel as though they don't have a safe, de-stigmatized, or informative space to ask questions about sexual health, *SITD* provides an anonymous space where questions are answered by experts in the field.

Program Goals & Objectives

The goal of *SITD* is to foster a sex-positive campus culture by: providing student-friendly and medically-accurate health information; role playing enthusiastic consent; and promoting campus- and community-based resources.

After attending *SITD*, students will report being:

1. More informed about their sexual health
2. Better prepared to talk about sexual health issues with a partner
3. More comfortable accessing sexual health resources on campus and in the community



Program Partners

From our experience, *SITD* is more comprehensive and successful if other organizations partner in the planning and facilitation process. Partners can be from within your institution or from the wider community.

Potential campus partnerships that you may want to explore include:

- Healthcare providers at university student health services
- Providers, prevention specialists, and student leaders with sexual assault response and prevention offices
- Faculty members in programs or schools of public health
- Student groups focused on public health or sexual health

Program Evaluation

More than 1,200 students have participated in *SITD* since its inception at Boston University in 2013. Students evaluate the program through a brief exit poll at the close of the event (See “Program Acceptability” for more information).

After attending *SITD*...

- 4 out of 5 students feel more informed about their sexual health
- 3 out of 4 students feel more prepared to talk about sexual issues with their partners
- 3 out of 4 students felt more comfortable accessing sexual/sexuality resources on campus

(*n* = 675)



Planning the Program

Sex in the Dark can be implemented on a scale and budget of your choosing. The steps and plans outlined in this section can easily be adapted for smaller schools or communities (See “Implementation at Smaller Schools”).

Implementation Steps & Timeline

2 Months before *SITD*

- ☐ Set a budget for the event
- ☐ Designate a point person or people for event planning and communications
- ☐ Research and contact potential panelists (e.g., faculty, community experts, campus health providers, and health educators)
- ☐ Select date of event based on panelist availability
- ☐ Book space for the event that fits your budget and anticipated attendance
- ☐ Reach out to potential student volunteers to help with the event
- ☐ Research glow-in-the-dark materials (e.g., types, costs, shipping)
- ☐ Contact potential vendors for donations (optional)

1 Month before *SITD*

- ☐ Add event to relevant community calendars
- ☐ Request necessary services and materials (e.g., tables for resource fair, A/V support)
- ☐ Create a public and shareable Facebook event or Eventbrite
- ☐ Create advertising materials
- ☐ Order glow-in-the-dark items (e.g., glow bracelets, necklaces, glasses)
- ☐ Schedule social media posts for the weeks leading up to the event
- ☐ Reach out to relevant campus and community organizations (e.g., *Greek* life, campus groups, Residence Life) to promote the event
- ☐ Distribute advertising materials



Image 1: *Sex in the Dark* invitation post



- ☐ Invite campus and community organizations to table at the resource fair
- ☐ Ask campus media outlets to cover the event

2 Weeks before *SITD*

- ☐ Send email reminders to panelists
- ☐ Confirm space booking
- ☐ Finalize list of volunteers
- ☐ Confirm donations with vendors
- ☐ Create event evaluation exit poll

1 Week before *SITD*

- ☐ Continue advertising campaign with targeted emails and social media posts
- ☐ Meet with volunteers to go over tasks and expectations
- ☐ Confirm set up time with tabling organizations
- ☐ Create signage for event (e.g., name of organizations tabling, list of donors, directions to event, and instructions for submitting questions)
- ☐ Create pre-event music playlist with popular and sex-positive songs
- ☐ Create and distribute day of schedule to volunteers, tabling organizations, facilities managers, and other relevant stakeholders
- ☐ Create a packing list with supplies needed for the event
- ☐ Confirm any services needed during the event (e.g., media services, custodial services, security details)

1 Day Before

- ☐ Pack up all supplies needed for the event

Day of *SITD*

The timeline of events on the day of *SITD* may depend on event space, volunteer, and tabling organization availability before the event begins. We ran our mini resource fair for one hour prior to the Q&A, but this is flexible. The run time for our Q&A is usually around two hours. Again, this can be changed depending on the size of your question pool.



- 1 hour before the mini resource fair:
 - ☐ Arrive at event space with supplies
 - ☐ Set up resource fair tables and chairs
 - ☐ Hang up signs to direct folks to the event



Image 2: Questions table

- 30 minutes before the mini resource fair:
 - ☐ Have all volunteers arrive
 - ☐ Set up table for students to write and submit questions
 - ☐ Set up table for glow swag and raffle prizes
 - ☐ Have tablers arrive to set up their stations
- At the time of the mini resource fair:
 - ☐ Open the doors to students and have volunteers stationed to greet them
 - ☐ Start your *SITD* music playlist
- 30 minutes before the Q&A:
 - ☐ Have sexperts arrive
 - ☐ Hand off questions to the sexperts to read
- 15 minutes before the Q&A:
 - ☐ Open the doors to the Q&A space
 - ☐ Have volunteers usher students into seats
- Time of the Q&A:
 - ☐ Introduce event and sexperts
 - ☐ Perform student "skits in the dark" (optional)
 - ☐ Q&A begins!



Image 3: Glow swag and raffle table

Program Materials

The materials for *SITD* will vary based on your budget and size of the event. Below is a list of a materials Boston University uses to facilitate *SITD*. This list can and should be adapted as needed.



- ☐ Glow-in-the-dark items (e.g., necklaces, bracelets, and glasses)
- ☐ World Association for Sexual Health's Declaration of Sexual Rights poster
- ☐ Paired raffle tickets (two colors):
 - ☐ First color for door prize winners (match to number of available door prizes)
 - ☐ Second color for raffle giveaway
- ☐ Donated door prizes
- ☐ Donated raffle prizes
- ☐ Direction signs for event location
- ☐ Computer or phone for music playlist
- ☐ Tabling organization name cards
- ☐ Signs with suggested questions for the sexperts
- ☐ Pens/markers
- ☐ Index cards for students to write questions on
- ☐ Box(es) for anonymous questions
- ☐ Sign(s) listing prize donors
- ☐ "Follow us on social media" sign
- ☐ Clipboards
- ☐ Flashlights
- ☐ Schedule of event memos
- ☐ Safer sex supplies (e.g., condoms, lubricants, dental dams)
- ☐ Thank you notes (and small gifts, if budget allows) for sexperts



Image 4: Tablers at the mini resource fair

Budget and Costs

SITD can be held on any budget depending on your preferred materials, expected turnout at the event, and resources available through your institution or community partners. For example, you could solicit donations or partner with other organizations to contain costs. You could also opt out of prizes/giveaways to make the event more affordable.



Image 5: Sample questions flyer



To create a budget for your event, list all of your desired materials and research the most cost-effective source to purchase them. If there's a possibility of getting materials donated, reach out early to community partners to explain the purpose of the event and ask for their help!



Marketing and Other Tools

Marketing Tools

There are a variety of tools you can use to market *SITD* depending on your budget, community engagement levels, and demographics.

Social Media

Social media marketing is a great tool to use for this event. Boston University creates a Facebook event and series of social media posts to promote *SITD* each year.

Wellness & Prevention Services' Communications Graduate Assistants craft and schedule posts for Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and use Canva.com to create the visuals. These posts included a series of graphics with sample questions to pique student interest in the event and get them thinking about potential questions (See "Image 6").



Image 6: Captions: "You have questions, our sexpert have answers. #SexintheDark"

"Sexpert Spotlights" also informed the community about the panelists beforehand in an eye-catching and engaging manner (See "Image 7").



Image 7: Caption: "Sophie Godley (MPH) is a Clinical Professor at @busph, and she is a veteran SITD sexpert. Sophie is an expert of adolescent sexual health and maternal and child health, and she teaches a breadth of courses in these disciplines. Sophie is passionate about teaching, racial equity, and baking. Check her out at #SexintheDark!"



Social media posts also included a link to the Facebook event. If you choose to rely on social media marketing, it may be beneficial to boost your content through Facebook promotions if your budget allows. Paying for promotions on Facebook can increase your event visibility (See “Image 8”). Below are the averaged analytics for the *SITD* Facebook event for 2015 and 2016, using paid promotions:

- 10,300 reached
- 2,000 viewed
- 374 engaged

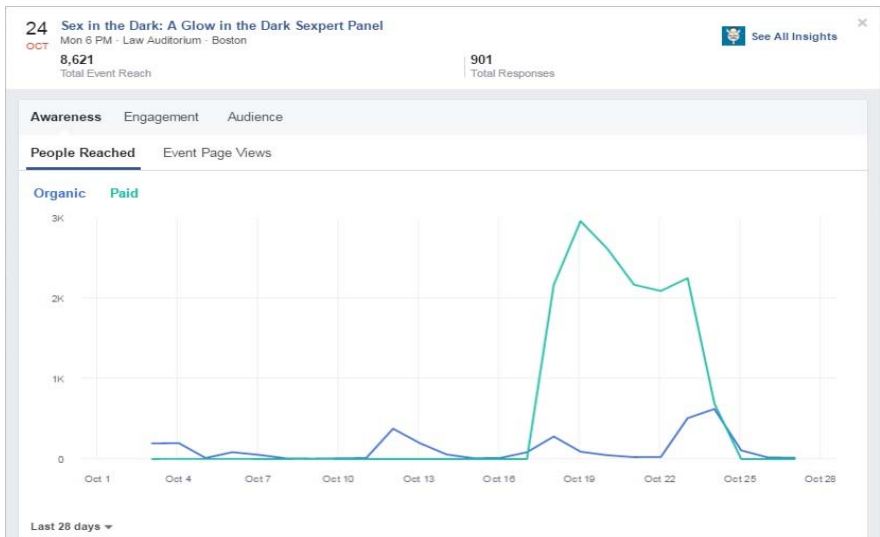


Image 8: *SITD* Facebook event visibility (2016)

Print Advertising

Boston University also uses print advertising and signage in its marketing strategy, including:

- BU shuttle bus advertisements for the week leading up to the event
- Large posters to hang outside the most populated freshman dorm
- Digital advertisements that run on TVs and computer screens all over campus

Print advertising can incur a fairly large cost. If large signs and ads are not in your budget, you can create flyer versions of your ads that can be printed on an office printer and distribute them around campus (e.g., in classroom buildings, residence halls, dining halls, student unions). Digital advertising can also be a good route to cut (or even eliminate) costs.

Word of Mouth

Many departments on campus may be interested in helping you get the word out about *SITD*. It may be useful to reach out to the following types of stakeholders for marketing assistance:

- Student Activities
- Residence Life
- Academic Advising



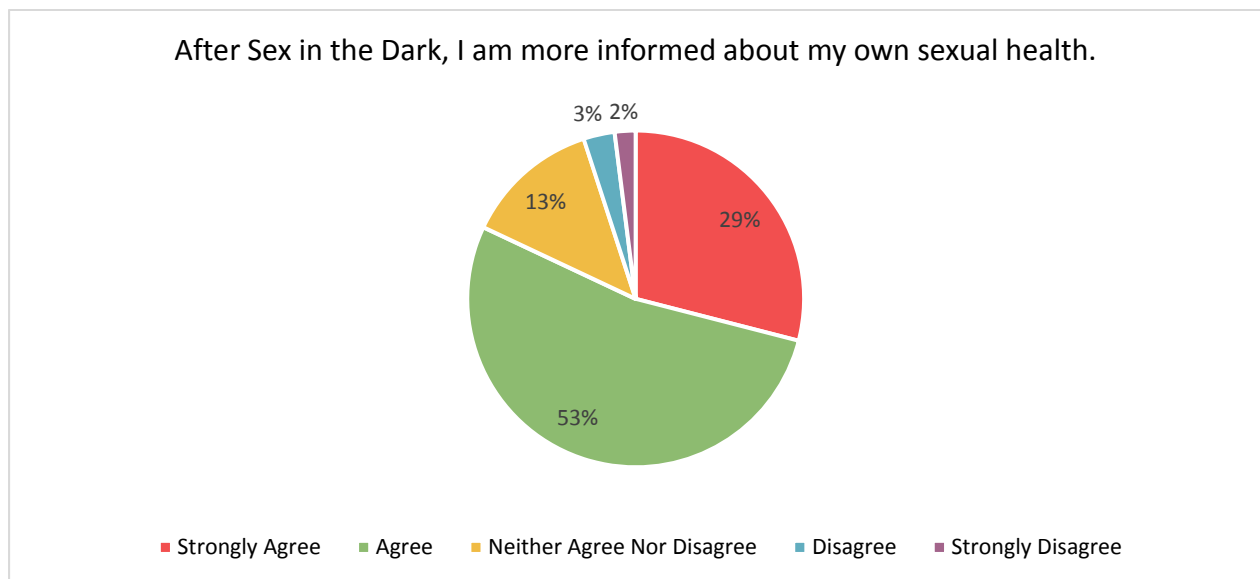
- Women and Gender Studies department (or other similarly themed departments)
- Public Health school or department
- Sexual health-focused campus groups
- Freshmen mentor programs

Be creative! Ask student volunteers if they know of classes that cover similar topics to *SITD*, and consider reaching out to those professors for word-of-mouth marketing assistance. You could also identify student organizations that have a similar or related mission to *SITD* and ask them to promote the event amongst their members.

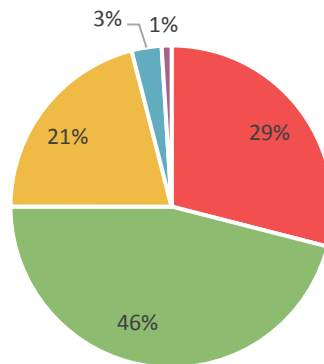
Program Acceptability

It's important to evaluate *SITD* to see how your event was received by attendees and whether it met your goals. Boston University uses the tool *Poll Everywhere* to conduct its evaluation survey immediately following the event. Evaluations can take other forms, as well, such as paper surveys or exit interviews.

At BU, students are asked to rate their agreement on a scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' about the following statements:

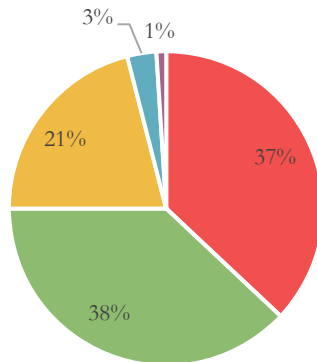


After attending Sex in the Dark, I am better prepared to talk about sexual issues with a partner.



Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

After attending Sex in the Dark, I feel more comfortable accessing sexuality resources on campus.



Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree Nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

(n=175)



Implementation at Smaller Schools

SITD can be adapted for any size university community. If you're hosting the event, some of the steps and materials mentioned in this guide may need to be adapted. Here are some ways *SITD* could be adjusted for smaller schools:

- Invite sexperts who are willing participate in the event for free or at a low cost
- Consider a classroom or other free/low-cost space (but keep anticipated audience in mind!)
- Recruit student volunteers to help set-up the event
- Ask campus departments, community organizations, or local health departments for donations
- Utilize free or low-cost marketing tools, such as social media and flyers



References

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2015, December 9). *New findings from CDC survey tool suggest too few schools teach prevention of HIV, STDs, pregnancy*. Retrieved from:
<https://www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/newsroom/2015/nhpc-press-release-schools-teaching-prevention.html>
- Garcia, C. M., Lechner, K. E., Frerich, E. A., Lust, K. A., & Eisenberg, M. E. (2014). College Students' Preferences for Health Care Providers when Accessing Sexual Health Resources. *Public Health Nursing, 31* (5), 387–394.
- Guttmacher Institute. (2016, April). *American Teens' Sources of Sexual Health Education*. Retrieved from:
<https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/facts-american-teens-sources-information-about-sex>





930 Commonwealth Ave.
Boston, MA, 02215

p. (617) 358-0485

wellness@bu.edu
bu.edu/shs/wellness



Boston University Student Health Services
Wellness & Prevention Services