Students to get first dibs on Dalai Lama tickets
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By Jordan Lundberg

On Nov. 4, 2011, university president the Rev. Michael Garanzini, S.J., announced Loyola would soon host a guest of world renown. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and spiritual leader of Tibet, His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso will visit campus on Thursday, April 26, to speak on interfaith collaboration.

Since that announcement, a coordinating committee comprising university administrators and faculty members has labored to finalize program details.

The Dalai Lama will come to the Gentile Arena for two events. According to new information from the chairs of the committee, the afternoon program will be exclusively for members of the Loyola community. Tickets for the event will be available in late March and students will have first pick, according to the committee chairs. Depending on seating location, ticket prices will range from $10-$100. The morning event, organized by the Tibet Center of Chicago, will be open to the public.

Lorraine Snyder, special assistant to the president of the university and one of the co-chairs of the committee said students will be able to buy tickets four days before anyone else.

“Giving students early and exclusive access to purchase tickets is a priority,” she added.

After student sales, the remainder of the 3,800 available tickets will go on sale to other members of the Loyola community, said Marian Claffey, assistant provost for administration of Loyola and the other chair of the committee. This includes faculty, staff, alumni, members of university board of trustees, the governing board of the university and members of the university’s council of regents, who serve as an advisory council to university president, the Rev. Michael Garanzini, S.J.

Ticket pricing will have a five-tiered structure. Tickets for the upper bowl bleacher seating of the arena will go on sale for $10; tickets to the lower bowl, seat-backed area will be $15. Claffey said that the majority of tickets, close to 3,000, will be within these price brackets.

Snyder noted that while students can purchase tickets for seating in any location, pricing for main-floor seating will be higher than arena seating. There will be about 350 seats available at $25 for the back half of the main-floor; it will be $50 for the front half. Snyder said that less than 200 seats in the first four rows nearest the stage will cost $100.

Community members will be limited to two tickets each and students cannot use Rambler Bucks to purchase them, Snyder said.

She added that the program will be recorded and broadcast via live web stream.

The afternoon event’s tickets will be available on a soon-to-be-launched website. “We’re going to be using an online ticket system,” Claffey said. “The same system that athletics and department of fine arts uses.”
Though a URL has yet to be released, the committee is pushing for the website to go live before spring break, Snyder said. She added that members of the Loyola community will be notified when the website goes live via email, Inside Loyola and the screens and message boards located around campus.

Snyder said ticket sales are intended to cover the cost of the event, which includes hiring ushers, transportation and paying for state-mandated security measures.

Sophomore Megan Bean is looking forward to the event.

“It’s a once-in-a-lifetime chance,” said the 20-year-old forensic science major. “[The Dalai Lama] is one of the biggest figureheads in the world.”

The event will focus on the peace-centered teachings of the Dalai Lama. His Holiness strives to promote interfaith collaboration through the teachings of Buddhism.

He is the 14th reincarnation of the original spiritual leader, said Tsering Dolma, a volunteer at the Tibet Center. She said that followers of any faith can ascribe to his teachings.

“You can practice your own practice,” Dolma said. “That is what His Holiness says always.” Loyola did not set out to host the Dalai Lama; Loyola officials were approached with the offer.

“It was a function of the relationship the university has had with the Tibet Center for 10 years,” Claffey said. “The dean of college of arts and sciences, Frank Fennell, is a good friend of the Tibet Center.”

“When the opportunity arose, it was actually the Tibet Center who spoke to the dean and they approached the president,” Claffey said.

The topic for the Loyola program will be “interfaith collaboration.” The Dalai Lama will presented with a Loyola University Chicago honorary degree at the program.

Students will have an active role in the program, according to Snyder.

“Five students will offer prayers,” Snyder said, “each in their own faith traditions.” The committee is also working with the Tibet Center on how to handle a question-and-answer session at the end of the Dalai Lama’s remarks at the afternoon program, Claffey said, but, she could not confirm whether students would be able to speak directly to His Holiness.

Sophomore Alex Cusick is unsure of how he feels about Loyola hosting the Dalai Lama.

“I think what he’s trying to do is good – gain independence for his people – it’s just not prudent for us to get involved,” said the 19-year-old psychology major. “He has a lot of celebrity which is bigger than what he is actually representing.”

Claffey said that logistics will be challenging. Assuming a large turnout for both events, she said that clearing everyone out of Gentile Arena after the morning event and preparing for the afternoon event will take planning. Another concern is promotion.
“It’s sometimes difficult to gauge the interest level of students,” she said. In the coming weeks there will be opportunities on campus to learn more about Buddhism, she said. She also added that the library has created a subject guide on its website specifically tailored to the Dalai Lama’s visit to campus.

Snyder added that the committee is organizing panel discussions and lectures leading up to the event. She said that once the site goes live, it will include on-campus opportunities to learn about the event and an FAQ page.

Public tickets for the morning event hosted by the Tibet Center are being sold for $40-$120, according to a statement from the Center.