

TIPS FOR PLANNING AN EVENT

Event planning is an exciting part of being a campus professional! We've developed this guide to help you execute a successful event that will draw attention and recognition for your campus or department.

SET ATTAINABLE GOALS

Every campus event has a purpose, whether it's to bring prospective students on campus to learn about the school or just to give students a fun and interactive break from their studies. Before you begin planning, identify the students' needs and how your event can help meet those needs. For example, students need to socialize with peers on campus; a campus concert can be a fun, affordable way to offer students free entertainment and an opportunity to spend time with their friends.

ESTABLISH YOUR AUDIENCE

Determine who you hope to reach with your event and identify their needs and interests. This will help you tailor the event to your target audience and maximize its effectiveness. If you're not sure what your audience's interests are, create an online poll or survey to learn more about them, or connect with organizations that work with the audience you hope to reach and learn from their successes.

DETERMINE YOUR BUDGET

Before you can begin planning the details, it's important to know what resources are available to you. As you begin to estimate costs, you'll know immediately if you need to seek donations from the campus or community. Once you know you'll need help, start making phone calls immediately. It's never too soon to secure support.

IDENTIFY YOUR PARTNERS

Partners are the campus staff, student groups or community organizations who have a stake in the success of your event. Partners can often provide support in the form of volunteers or donations. You'll need to identify these partners early so you can keep them updated regularly and get their feedback.

IDENTIFY YOUR VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are essential to any event because they'll be there throughout the planning and on the day of the event. Take advantage of campus marketing such as the campus newspaper, flyers and chalking so your students know how to get involved. Target students with an interest in the event, such as those studying a related subject, dorm residents or fraternities and sororities.

Volunteering for campus events is a great way for students to explore leadership roles. The more involvement students have in the planning of an event, the more they care about the outcome and the more you can rely on them on the day of the event. Set up a committee and identify leadership positions. Be clear about the responsibilities of each position on the committee and encourage the students to delegate tasks. Responsibility breeds investment, and an invested volunteer is a reliable volunteer.

Photo provided by Cameron University



CHOOSE A DATE

When choosing a date, ask yourself what else your audience might be doing on a Thursday afternoon and how can you make your event a more appealing alternative. Try to avoid conflicts with major campus and community events such as festivals, sporting events and regular church meetings.

CHOOSE A LOCATION

You'll need to consider several factors when picking a venue. The first question you'll need to answer is this: is your event an indoor event, an outdoor event or both? Next, think about the following factors:

- Estimated attendance
- Lighting
- Space
- Parking
- Electrical needs (particularly if outdoors)

SET UP A TIMELINE AND A TASK-LIST

Start with a timeline that includes a list of all tasks that must be completed to prepare for the event. This will include important deadlines, deposits due for equipment or services and booking speakers or entertainment. Be sure your committee members understand clearly which tasks they're responsible for.

PUBLICIZE EARLY AND OFTEN

Publicity is the key to attendance and campuses offer a host of free or cheap marketing options. Here are a few ideas:

- Consider sending out 'Save the Date' notices before you've even nailed down any details.
- Don't be stingy with bulletin board flyers, handbills and e-mail blitzes. Put an advertisement in campus newspapers, ask local businesses to post flyers and send press releases to local media.
- Consider unique ways to bring attention to the event, also known as viral marketing. For example, have students put on a skit promoting the event in a conspicuous area of campus.

PLAN FOR THE WORST, HOPE FOR THE BEST

No matter how well you plan, things may go wrong. Put your heads together to anticipate potential problems and create a 'Plan B'. Follow-up with all of your vendors, speakers or entertainers and gather your materials the day before so you'll be able to handle challenges as they come. Leave yourself or an important committee member free on the day of the event to deal with the unexpected.

Try This:

NEED MORE HELP? CALL FOR REINFORCEMENTS!



If you need help brainstorming event ideas, tailoring an event to meet your school's needs or other support, OCAP is here for you! Contact your Outreach Services Specialist at 866.443.7420 or UCanGo2@ocap.org for information, ideas and assistance planning your event.