

EVENT TIMELINE

SIX MONTHS TO A YEAR AHEAD

- Determine the purpose, format, and feasibility of the event
- Create an estimated budget and get approval
- Select the date, but before confirming it clear the date with important participants and double-check for conflicts with other major functions
- Recruit event team
- Draw up preliminary guest list categories. Estimate attendance. Begin collecting addresses for save-the-date mailing
- Select the theme
- Select and reserve a facility
- Develop a rain plan if the event is to be held outdoors
- Reserve a block of hotel rooms, if necessary
- Choose a caterer
- Select an event designer, who may aid with décor/, flowers, etc.
- Select and order recognition items (award, honor, citation)
- Order favors, souvenirs, printed folders, and other give-away items
- Reserve rental equipment such as vans, buses, tables, chairs, tents, podiums, etc.
- Confirm a master of ceremonies and the program speakers
- Plan audio-visual presentations
- Make preliminary security arrangements
- Contact the Office of Risk Management to discuss insurance coverage
- Get all necessary administrative approvals
- Plan promotion and publicity

THREE TO SIX MONTHS AHEAD

- Write copy, design and get approval of printed invitations and all other printed materials
- Finalize and get approval of the guest list
- Prepare mailing labels
- Contact Mail and Document Services to coordinate the printed materials mailing
- Send save-the-date announcements to guests (3-5 months prior to the event)
- Select menus and submit them for approval
- Make contact with program participants and
 - Supply suggestions for their remarks
 - Gather their biographical information
 - Request a black and white glossy photo of each participant for publicity and programs
- Keep campus officials, deans, and administrative officers informed of your plans, and ask for their support
- Meet with a Special Events Parking coordinator to discuss parking/shuttle needs
- Decide on music, book entertainers and talent
- Prepare and get all necessary signatures on performance agreements
- Finalize the audiovisual presentations
- Plan the decorations and color scheme
- Order props, novelties, foods, or other special needs
- Choose and meet with the florist
- Update security on your plans. Advise Logistic Services if dignitaries will be invited.
- Begin publicity
- Hire a photographer and videographer
- Begin creating a logistical outline to document all arrangements as they are decided on and confirmed.

TWO MONTHS AHEAD

- ❑ Prepare mailing labels for invitation mailing
- ❑ Send out invitations 4 – 6 weeks prior to event
- ❑ Finalize decor and facility arrangements
- ❑ Make hotel and transportation arrangements for out-of-town dignitaries and guests
- ❑ Mail an itinerary to dignitaries
- ❑ Secure other university representatives to assist
- ❑ Double-check the extra help that will be needed including valets, checkroom attendants, and greeters
- ❑ Make direction and welcome signs
- ❑ Write and print the program and menu cards
- ❑ Order any ceremonial items needed such as flags, the university seal, ceremonial scissors
- ❑ Inspect the facility and request repairs to hazards, such as loose edges on stairs and upturned edges on carpeting
- ❑ Continue publicity on schedule
- ❑ Recruit volunteers to staff registration or assist as escorts and greeters, etc.

TWO TO FOUR WEEKS AHEAD

- ❑ Record and acknowledge RSVPs as they are received
- ❑ Mail out confirmations tickets, parking permits, if necessary
- ❑ Ask Logistic Services to schedule a crew to mow and trim the grounds of the venue the day before your event. If outdoors, request the sprinklers be turned off
- ❑ Prepare registration packets
- ❑ Double-check publicity progress with Media Relations. Revise and update plans if necessary.
- ❑ Send detailed instructions to all program participants with tickets, parking permits, and maps
- ❑ Finalize details with caterer, rental company, and all vendors
- ❑ Write speeches and introductions, and get them approved
- ❑ Take delivery on favors, mementos, novelty items and double-check for correct amount
- ❑ Get table numbers made
- ❑ Enlarge a diagram of the room to be used as seating chart
- ❑ Create a production schedule outlining all deliveries, cues, and timing for the event

ONE WEEK AHEAD

- ❑ Ascertain the intentions of anyone who has not sent an RSVP
- ❑ Print out the guest list in alphabetical order
- ❑ Finish place cards, table cards, and/or name tags
- ❑ Create the seating chart
- ❑ Brief the greeters, escorts and volunteers on their duties
- ❑ Gather all presentation items such as gifts, plaques, trophies. Collect ceremonial items. Designate one person to be in charge of transporting them to the event site
- ❑ Plan an arrival briefing for VIPs if necessary
- ❑ Prepare the briefing packet and send along with the guest list (with full names, titles, business and professional affiliations, and other specific interests), biographies, and the final schedule of events to the academic or administrative leadership or official host
- ❑ Call security and double-check all arrangements. Provide them with final itineraries and VIP information.
- ❑ Deliver prepared introductions, citations, and speeches to those who will read them
- ❑ Make catering guarantees
- ❑ Prepare your event box with any supplies, such as tape, string, zip ties, staplers, clip boards, baskets, etc. you may need

THE BIG DAY

- Arrive early
- Bring the logistical outline, production schedule, instructions, directions, phone numbers, banquet orders, seating charts, name tags, table assignments, guest lists, and the event supply box with you
- Check all facilities and grounds
- Set up event venue with place cards, signs, favors, awards, etc.
- Conduct sound and equipment checks
- Set up registration. Be sure it is ready no later than 30 minutes prior to the start of your event.
- Follow your production schedule
- Relax and smile

AFTER THE EVENT

- Send thank you notes to staff, volunteers and vendors
- Finalize billing and prepare final budget
- Conduct event debriefing to determine success or ways to improve in the future
- Survey attendees, if appropriate.

Based on materials in Special Events and Planning for Success by April Harris published by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). All rights reserved.