

Planning an Event at WIU

To plan a fun and successful event at Western Illinois University, The Office of Student Activities would like to offer you a few suggestions to make your planning experience easy and enjoyable. Here are some tips you should consider:

- **Allow time to plan an event** - Planning is the most crucial and time-consuming aspect for any type of event. The earlier you start, the more likely you are to secure your preferred venue on your preferred date and develop a successful event.
- **Budget** - Have dollar figures in mind when you plan. You should be able to build a budget based on your event plan. An account number is required when booking an event at Western Illinois University.
- **Reserve** a room - based on the number of attendees you realistically expect and best fulfills the purpose of the event. You don't want to crowd your guests and you want to accommodate all the activities during your event. The Office of Student Activities can offer suggestions.
- **Ordering** equipment and determining a room's furniture placement will be simplified if you plan in advance how you want the room to look and discuss it with our Office of Conference and Event Services can offer suggestions. Include what elements you feel are necessary, such as food tables, staging, podiums, sound equipment, etc.

Event Planning Questions You Can Prepare For:

- ✓ Event Name: _____

- ✓ Sponsoring Group: _____

- ✓ Date of event: _____

- ✓ Purpose of event: _____

- ✓ Event Start Time and End Time: _____

- ✓ Number of People Attending: _____

- ✓ Room Preference: _____

- ✓ Name, Address & Telephone of One Contact person

- ✓ Event Type (meeting, banquet, special event, etc.):

- ✓ Event Agenda: _____

- ✓ Equipment, including tables, chairs, and Audio Visual needs:

- ✓ Catering needs:

- ✓ If the event is in need of sound or additional lighting equipment: __ WESTEC __ Union

- ✓ Set-up time needed for your organization (it is important to include this time in your room reservation): _____
- ✓ Payment information is required when reserving space: _____

Additional Tips for Throwing a Successful Event

- **Plan ahead.** We can't say this enough! You should contact the Office of Conference and Event Services and Sodexo 3 to 12 months ahead of time for any sizeable event, such as a banquet, dance, conference, concert, or other event where more than 100 people will be attending. This should be done before you send out invitations or advertisements.
- **Be prepared if your event is outside.** Consider renting a rain site or tent for bad weather. Don't forget you will also need garbage cans, and possibly fencing, electricity, or extra lighting.
- **Read contracts carefully, even the boring parts.** It will save you money and headaches down the road. The contract is what the facility or business will provide for you; if you don't see something on the contract, you won't see it at the event. It also states what your obligations are, which are very important to know.
- **Find out the maximum capacity of the room for the way you want it set before you invite people.** Buffets, stages, award tables, etc. all take space away from the room, which will affect how many guests the room can accommodate.
- **If money is tight, seek donations or co-sponsorship.** Some businesses, such as florists and caterers, may be willing to donate their product in exchange for advertising. Look up alumni associated with your organization and ask for their help. Build relationships with other student organizations that may have an interest in your event or program.
- **Negotiate with Sodexo.** Most will customize menus. They can do more for you if you give them a budget to work with. Make sure you are clear when discussing prices; a "per person" price is usually just for food and does not include linen, or decoration.
- **Think about paying for extras that will make your event a success.** Rental of items like professional sound equipment, or extra servers could make a big difference in the success of your event. Linen, decorations, and extra lighting may go far in giving you the ambiance you want.
- **Find out the University Union decoration policies before purchasing decorations.** The Conference and Event Services office can inform you of these policies.
- **Know in advance what extras you will need for your event.** The University Union will provide many of the extras you need for your event, dry erase boards, overhead projectors, and microphones. If you need equipment for a PowerPoint presentation it is important to inform the Conference and Event Services office as soon as possible because supplies are limited. For more

information on screens, laptops, and related equipment contact the Office of Conference and Event Services.

- **If you are selling tickets for to the event consider your resources on campus.** The University Union Service Center is a valuable resource for ticket sales. Be advised that there is a cost associated with their services.
- **Be aware that events with an admission or participant fees (including donations) may incur space costs.** An organization will be charged the WIU rate for space rental in the University Union if participation in the student organization event has an admission cost or includes off-campus participants.

Event Timeline

12-16 weeks prior to event (or earlier if possible):

- Reserve space and equipment. (Inquire about space capacities and room set-ups)
- Establish budget, considering honorarium, publicity, program, decorating, or equipment costs.
- Check to see if dates conflict with other events.
- Check on availability of speaker, artist, administrator, etc.
- Select artist or speaker, and contact an agent (if applicable).
- Set up timeline for members to complete tasks.

8-10 weeks prior to the event:

- Set stage requirements and/or room set-up
- Contact University Relations for a press release, contact campus TV and newspaper.
- Prepare all advertising.
- Order tickets or set up tickets with the University Union Service Center.
- Order special equipment, such as audio visual needs.

5-7 weeks prior to the event:

- Have first publicity released to newspaper.
- Complete final budget.

- ☑ If catering is needed, contact caterer and set up menu.
- ☑ Design program, posters, and flyers.

3-4 weeks prior to the event:

- ☑ Start any advertising campaigns (consult campus posting policy).
- ☑ Place all flyers, posters, etc. around campus.
- ☑ Send program to printer.
- ☑ Check to make sure arrangements are on schedule.
- ☑ Start making any decorations.
- ☑ Order any awards.

1-2 weeks prior to event:

- ☑ Check on all advertising to ensure the effectiveness and timing.
- ☑ Make final check of equipment, facilities, and human resources.
- ☑ Meet with committee to take care of last-minute details. Use committee for last-minute publicity push.
- ☑ Finish any decorations.
- ☑ Pick up programs.
- ☑ Arrange for transportation of speaker or artist (if necessary).

Day of event:

- ☑ Make last minute check of room to ensure correct set-up.
- ☑ Make final arrangements for speaker and special guest introduction.
- ☑ Arrange for equipment check.

- Put up decorations.
- Pick up any last minute items.