Event Planning Guidelines

Hosting a successful event on campus can be very rewarding, but it requires plenty of planning to ensure you maximize your event’s potential to generate attendance and positive visibility for your group. Follow these guidelines and planning timeline at the end to assist your group in planning a successful event.

Outline Your Event Concept
- What do you hope to accomplish with your event? Recruit new members, promote awareness about a topic, inspire discussion or action?
- What are you hoping that people will take from the event?
- How many people do you hope to attract? Who is your intended audience?
- How does the nature of your event fit with the goals of your organization?
- What type of event format accomplishes the goals you have for your event?
- How can I best utilize Marymount resources (Office of Student Activities (OSA), SGA, Co-Curricular Council, Commuter Activities Board, other MU Student Organizations, etc.) to help refine my ideas, identify challenges and find opportunities?

Take Care of Basic Event Logistics

Date/Time
When will the event be best scheduled?
- Check the University Events calendar, Academic calendar, and Student Activities calendar to make sure you steer clear of potential conflicts that might impact the attendance and visibility of your event.

When will the program have the best attendance?
- Consider when your target population is on campus and when they will be free to attend your event; Keep in mind that academic obligations come first, and events during midterms, reading period or exams are strongly discouraged.

Location & Facilities
Where could we host an event like this and what venues are available?
- All student clubs and organizations must notify the OSA of any requests to reserve space
  - Reservations for the Lee Center, Library Auditorium, Barry Gallery, Ballston Auditorium, Dining Hall, Caruthers Hall, Ostapenko Hall and Lawn or Field areas must be made through the OSA at least 30 days in advance to hold a space. Additional paperwork is necessary to reserve these rooms through other departments on campus. Staff members in the OSA can assist in completing these forms, but will not complete the final paperwork necessary to confirm reservations.
  - Reservations for Classroom space should be made through the OSA at least two weeks in advance.
  - Reservations can be made at the Office of Student Development for the Lodge Lounge, Kitchen, and Conference Room. Rooms are available on a first come, first serve basis.
  - Use of any Residence Hall Floor Lounges or Lobbies must be made with the Residence Life Office. All activities being held in the Residence Halls must comply with Residence Life policies including quiet hours.
- If hosting the event outdoors, make sure to reserve a rain location in case of inclement weather

What additional resources will we need to carry out this event?
- After reserving your event space through OSA and completing the necessary event request form, make sure you follow up with Physical Plant (703-284-1529) to check on the status of any requested tables and chairs and to describe and confirm the layout of the space on the day of the event.
- If you need to request food service, serving plates, utensils, and table cloths, you will need to follow up with Sodexo/Dining Services (703-284-5790) to confirm the cost of these materials and the delivery logistics for the day of.
- If you are in need of any tech support, such as computers, projectors, TVs, contact IT Services (703-526-6990) to follow up on this portion of your request.
Register Your Event

General Policies

- Any student club or organization planning a program should complete a Student Club and Organization Program Proposal; This form is available in the OSA, Lodge 2nd Floor.
- In order to best meet the needs of a club or organization, the program proposal form should be submitted to the Office of Student Activities at least 30 days prior to the program. The Director or Assistant Director of Student Activities will assess the proposal, contact the club leadership for further discussion or questions if needed, and make appropriate decisions within a two-week period.
- Clubs and organizations should not proceed with planning a program until the Director or Assistant Director of Student Activities has granted official approval.

Speakers/Performers/Vendors and Contracts

- All speakers, entertainers, bands, and DJ’s or vendors sponsored by student clubs and organizations must be approved by the OSA in advance.
- Once approval is granted, the club will draft a formal letter inviting the speaker/performer or vendor to Marymount. This letter may be co-signed by the Director or Assistant Director of Student Activities.
- The administration reserves the right to determine whether invitations should be extended to speakers, performers, organizations or vendors whose views may be contrary to the mission of the University. It also reserves the right to cancel any engagement of speakers/performers.
- Student organizations are not permitted to enter into contracts or purchases with outside speakers/performers or their agents or vendors. Students should not make any written or verbal agreements with speakers/performers, agents or vendors. Such contracts must always have the signature of an authorized Marymount staff member.

Budget & Funding

*What kind of budget will we need to make this event happen?*

- Before you can even begin to apply for funding, you must figure out how much your event will actually cost. Call vendors to get estimates on all of the different components of your event in order to put together a good budget to use when applying for funding. If you are ordering food through Sodexo, make sure to call for an estimate of this price.

*How will we fund this event?*

- Since you have chosen to organize a career-related event, after meeting with a Career Coach to discuss your plans and after filling out the appropriate form through the Career Services office, you will receive a **$50 stipend** for your event. If you need more money:
  - Activities, programs or projects for which a student club/organization’s funds are expended must have the prior approval of the OSA. They must also be consistent with the University mission, Student Development objectives and the goals of the student organization.
  - If the cost of the event will not be covered in the budget you requested for the semester by your club/organization through the SGA, you may request additional funds for an event by emailing sgafinance@marymount.edu. For more information on this, check out the Student Activities Handbook.

Marketing

*What kind of marketing do we need to make the event successful?*

- In order to have a successful event, it must be advertised well, especially because of the ever increasing competition for student’s attention on campus. For ideas on ways to advertise, speak with a Career Coach or check out the Student Activities Handbook.
- Think about the concept of your event and how it relates to you advertising campaign.
- Don’t start too late! Consider a multi-prong approach with waves of different kinds of advertising. We recommend starting a minimum of two-weeks in advance with your first round of marketing.
- Word of mouth is probably the best form of advertising. Make sure your group members feel ownership over the event and will recruit friends and colleagues to attend.
• When making flyers/posting or writing emails, make sure to proof everything carefully before it goes out. Always include the date, time and location, as well as the event description and a contact email address for questions.

Inviting Outside Guests to Participate in Your Event
• If you would like to invite professionals or other partners from the local community to come participate in your career-related event, be sure to reach out to them as soon as possible (we recommend at least three weeks in advance of your event) with important details regarding the event and keep them in the loop as the event approaches.
  o In your initial invitation, be sure to include the date, time frame, and purpose of the event; describe how the individual will be involved, what role you are hoping them to play, and if any advance preparation is necessary.
  o Once you receive confirmation of their participation, send along driving and metro directions to Marymount’s campus and make sure to reserve the individual(s) a parking space by emailing parkingspace@marymount.edu with the following information: the invite’s name, the date the parking space is requested and for what time frame the parking space will be used. Ask your invite to arrive at least 15 minutes early the day of.
  o On the day of the event, make sure you or someone from your organization is present in the parking lot or bus stop to greet the individual and walk them to the event location on campus. Be sure this individual knows who will be greeting them in the lot from your organization in advance.
  o After the event, be sure to follow up with a hand written thank you note signed by the members of your organization.

General Event Planning Timeline

At Least 3 Weeks Out
• Settle on your event concept with other club/organization members and set event goals
• Confirm date, time, and location by completing the necessary paperwork through OSA and follow up with necessary offices (IT Services, Physical Plant, Parking, Sodexo, etc.) for additional set-up
• Invite/Confirm the participation of any individuals from off campus
• Confirm event volunteers from your club/organization and begin assigning duties
• Determine budget and request additional funding as needed

2 Weeks Out
• Begin your initial advertising campaign
• Follow up with event volunteers to make sure they are accomplishing assigned tasks
• Purchase any supplies and follow up with funding requests if needed
• Send confirmation email to individuals you have invited from off campus with directions for the day of the event and any important logistical information

Day of Event
• Have to-do list, day-of schedule and contact info for relevant offices/individuals on hand.
• Arrive 45/30 min utes early to event site to make sure everything is set (be sure to test any A/V equipment)
• Welcome guests and keep a head count; have a sign in sheet ready if you want to follow up after the event
• Make sure there is someone to greet individuals from off campus in the appropriate location at the right time
• Clean up necessary materials within the venue after event has been completed.

Post-Event Responsibilities
• Write thank you notes to all sponsors, campus partners, visiting professionals and/or volunteers.
• Sit down with fellow club/organization members to process the event and talk about things that went well and areas for improvement so that you can address those areas for future events
• Follow up with event attendees by email if necessary to provide additional resources/information