

University of California, Irvine

Venue Selection Guidelines

Venue selection can be a challenging part of the event planning process. It should be one of the first logistical decisions made and as EARLY as possible, especially if the event date is not flexible. This is sometimes the case when booking a specific keynote speaker or accommodating schedules for key members that must attend. Some months are also notoriously busy seasons for events – book early for events taking place in the Spring (April/May) and Fall (September/October).

Picking the Right Venue

Audience and Space

The audience and program should be kept in mind when selecting a venue. For example, hosting an event for the School of Arts in the School of Engineering building doesn't make sense. The program will also dictate the amount of space needed. Do not rely solely on maximum capacities provided by the venue. Often times, these capacities are "wall to wall" and do not take into account necessary additions like catering tables, stage, dance floor, audiovisual setup, etc. These components can take up a significant amount of space and affect the number of guests the venue can accommodate.

Visiting the Venue

Always visit the venue before confirming or signing a contract. If possible, bring the client with you to set appropriate expectations and get feedback. This also helps form a better visual understanding moving forward during planning meetings. Plot out with the venue manager where all the event elements will go (i.e. location of registration, stage, kitchen facilities, green room, etc.). Don't make assumptions – there may be added cost or safety restrictions on what can go where. Consult with a fire marshal prior to the event to ensure that setup is approved. Remember to consider all parts of the guest experience and confirm that the venue has adequate parking and restroom facilities for your guests. Walk the route of your event from parking to all locations guests will visit to ensure accessibility for the elderly or disabled and proper directional signage.

Other Considerations

When reserving the venue, make sure to block enough time for setup and strike in addition to the event time. Find out what other events will be going on at the same time – especially if adjacent or near your venue space. If storage space is needed for staging during the event, discuss this need with the event manager to identify a location. Also, make sure to discuss needs for facilities/custodial services (vacuuming, cleaning), replenishing restroom supplies, additional or moved equipment, air conditioning, and building/room access. Some buildings/rooms have automated systems that turn off lights, lock doors/elevators, and restrict changes to A/C after certain hours. It is important to consider all of these event needs in advance.

Outdoor Venues

Outdoor events can provide a beautiful and unique landscape for events. However, there are different considerations that should be addressed before selecting an outdoor venue.

General Considerations

The most obvious consideration when looking at outdoor venues is weather. Luckily, Southern California has warm, moderate climate most of the year. However, the chance of rain or wind exists throughout the year so it is important to

pay attention to forecasts, look at past weather history, and always plan for a rain contingency! Remember that it gets colder in the evening so it is important to determine a need for heaters as this adds to both cost and space. Some venues may have restrictions for heaters in certain areas – be sure to discuss this with the event manager. The time of year will also affect lighting. If an event is taking place in the evening, be mindful and check sunset time to determine if additional lighting/heating is needed. For daytime events, light can also affect the visibility of visual projections such as video or PowerPoint slides. Visual media is discouraged at outdoor venues if slated for daytime hours. As with indoor venues, make sure to discuss needs for custodial/grounds services. Power washing, raking, sprinkler shut off, or maintenance may be necessary. You will also want to consider what restrooms will be utilized and confirm there is access to those facilities during the event.

Campus Considerations

In addition to the components mentioned above, outdoor events on campus require a couple other considerations. The campus has restrictions to amplified sound outdoors. If planning to use a PA system, DJ/band, bullhorn, radio, etc., a [Request for Amplified Sound](#) must be submitted and approved. If alcohol will be served at the event, an additional step must be taken beyond completing the [Request to Serve or Sell Alcoholic Beverages](#) form. To restrict access to alcohol for students and other uninvited passerby, the space must be barricaded and monitored. Stanchioned barricades should enclose the event (separating guests from passerby), signs reading “No Alcohol Beyond this Point” should be displayed at the entrance/exit, and a staff member should be designated to monitor the area. When submitting the Request to Serve or Sell Alcoholic Beverages form, a diagram of the venue illustrating the barricaded area should also be submitted for approval.