A. P.I.E.: Four Easy Steps to Event Planning

A.   **Assess Needs**

Your first step is to asses what programs interest you and what interests your target audience need to hear. Use the following methods and come up with some more on your own. Remember, the best programming effort in the world can be almost useless when it does not fill a need or explore an interest of your target audience.

- **Talk to students:** Individually and in groups
- **Observe!**
- **Know your demographics:** % of seniors, men, women, interests, qualities, skills, etc.
- **Conduct surveys and interest inventories**
    - o Written survey, questionnaire or interest inventory
    - o Conduct door to door, club to club or phone surveys
    - o Formal survey: Formulated to gather statistics which could be used to draw up a proposal or effect change
    - o Informal survey: More casual—used to gather ideas, opinions, needs, and info.
- **Look at past program reports/evaluations for recommendations**
    - o Previous year's files usually have this information

- **Start a suggestion box or some type of system for open suggestion**
    - o An email or website is a good source for this need

Hints for assessing needs:

1. **Assess adequately.** You should ask for lots and lots of input. If you know the ideas of only 10% of your target audience, you probably won't have a clue about what the majority is interested in.
2. **Don't program with a crystal ball.** Programs or individuals who rely on their own instincts for programming sooner or later will find themselves sponsoring a program that nobody attends! Involve your target audience—get their cooperation an input, formulate planning committee's.
3. **How's your timing?** Some topics are seasonal and would be inappropriate or even absurd during off-seasons. Example: Sun tanning tips in December. Likewise, a stress –relieving program may have a greater audience during midterms or finals.

P.   **Plan the Event**

Decide on the program's goal.

- Is it to entertain? To educate? To fundraise? To increase cultural awareness?

- Keep in mind current issues on campus, what significant events have happened recently, and the time of year.

Brainstorm how best to meet your goal (*Include link to brainstorming tips here*)

- Allow everyone to throw out ideas in a non-judgmental atmosphere. Write them *all* down no matter how off-the-wall.

- After all ideas have been generated, look at strengths and weaknesses of each one by keeping a realistic time line in mind. Decide together which are feasible and have a good chance of success.

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Decide what, when and where

- Agree on the nature of the program. Think up a good title for it.

- Pick a time and date. Avoid previously scheduled campus events, meals, solar eclipses, Super Bowls, favorite TV shows times, midterms, finals, etc.

- Choose a location on campus or off campus depending on your need. Allow adequate space, good lighting, comfy seating, audio/visual needs, few distractions, etc.

- Review University policies related to program, special permits, reservations, regulations, and any special requirements.

Create a timeline and outline tasks

- Develop a realistic timeline based on the entire planning process (A to Z) using a system called backward planning
- Procurement of resources (who or what the program will be built around)
- Total budget? (Include a link to budget tips here)
- Publicity (include link to publicity tips here), space reservation, equipment needs, refreshments, etc.
- Set-up (before) and clean up (after)
- Add everything to a master calendar

Delegate the tasks *(include a link to delegation tips here)*

- Form a committee to take charge (if necessary)
- Get help from volunteers and friends!
- Members of your planning committee should be assigned meaningful tasks.
- Use a calendar, agree on deadlines for each task. Agree on who will do what.

Finalize plans and monitor everyone's progress.

Hints for planning:

1. Be persistent in locating and lining up good resources, speakers, etc.
2. Publicize thoroughly, creatively, and well in advance! Be imaginative.
3. When you have presenters, tell them about their audience: gender, class, estimated size, interests, etc. Be honest: If you don't expect 150 people at the door, don't tell them there will be standing room only crowds.

I.   **Implement the Program**

Prepare the location beforehand
Get there early and arrange seating, equipment, and other logistics. Prepare refreshments (if applicable)

Have someone meet your presenters (if you have any)
Escort them to the program's location

Present a brief introduction
If the group is uncomfortable, you might begin with an icebreaker (include link to icebreaker tips here)

Be prepare to facilitate and help discussion if needed

Be an active participant in the program

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Don't leave early! Participate.

Thank all presenters and audience members for attending
Afterwards, send thank you notes to all who helped organize the program (including the planning committee)

These should be sent within a week of the program!

Hints for implementing:

1.   Make sure everyone who participates, presents, attends, etc. leaves with the best possible feelings about their role and involvement. If they leave happy, they will attend your future events, bring their friends, and help you out the next time.

2.   Have a contingency plan. Do the best job possible to anticipate problems or last minute crisis. Have a secondary plan to execute if necessary.

E.   **Evaluate the Program**

Ask the audience what they thought

Informal (spoken) evaluation or written evaluation. Ask what they liked? Disliked? Learned? Found valuable? Thought bogus, etc?

Ask presenters and planning committee members for feedback and suggestions

Fill out a program report

This form summarizes the effectiveness, fun, and usefulness of the program (You can develop your own report *Include a link to program evaluation tips here.*). Fill out this report immediately after the program. This will be highly useful for others who try to do similar programs in the future.

Congratulate yourself on a job well done!!!

Hints for evaluating:

1.   Don't wait to evaluate! You will forget what you liked best and least.
2.   Get as much feedback as possible so that the next time this program is tried, the organizers will have some good ideas about how it went. A good starting point for future planning committees.