**Event Planning Tips**

**SPECIAL EVENTS:**

**Catering Contracts**

* Scrutinize the banquet event order for accuracy and thoroughness.
* Per-person food quotes may be listed as ++. This is for service and sales tax. UNTHSC is tax exempt in Texas. These figures are not included in the price per person and can add substantially to your overall cost. Service fees alone can range between 18 and 24%.
* Check with your caterer/venue about what the service charge includes. Some include gratuity, others do not.
* Be moderate when providing the catering guarantee. Judge the past history of this, or similar, events to determine the average attrition (no- show) rate – often in the range of 10%. You will likely have guests who do not RSVP as well.
* If it is a seated meal, provide a few extra seats and don’t order for less than the RSVP number.
* Most caterers provide an overage (often 5%) of food into the guarantee – confirm with your vendor.

**Menu Considerations**

* When planning the menu, be mindful of the time of day and guest expectations on what options and quantity of food will be provided.
* Provide a variety of foods, and offer vegetarian and gluten-free selections. Consider allergy concerns: Shellfish, nuts etc. Label each dish.
* Be mindful of cultural or religious preferences of guests for certain events.
* When serving sodas, offer regular, diet, and caffeine-free. Always offer water.
* For coffee service, order 70% regular and 30% decaffeinated. Depending on the size of the cup, there are 16-20 cups of coffee in a gallon.
* Make sure hors d’oeuvres or finger foods can be eaten in one or two bites easily.
* Provide eating utensils, when appropriate, as some guests prefer using them with finger foods.
* For pre-meal cocktail hours, 4-6 hors d’oeuvres per person per hour is usually adequate. For receptions, plan on 5-7 pieces per person per hour. A stationary display or two always works well as an addition to passed hors d’oeuvres.

**Serving Alcohol**

* All alcohol served on campus must be served by a Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission-certified bartender.
* Alcohol may not be served on campus before 5 p.m., per UNTHSC policy.
* Any alcohol service on campus requires an alcohol request form be submitted through Room Scheduling and HSC Police will determine the need of an officer (fee required).
* If alcohol is served and an admission fee is charged -- or any purchase is required -- a TABC permit must be obtained.
* Offer both white and red wine, unless venue guidelines specify red wine is not allowed.
* Generally calculate 2.5 glasses of wine per person when ordering. On average, there are 5 glasses in a bottle and 12 bottles in a case.
* Ask for a cork or bottle count to double check quantity at end of the event.
* If using drink tickets, ask the bartender for the tickets at the end of the evening.
* If students are at an event where alcohol is served, plan to check identification at bars.
* Always serve food and provide water when alcohol is served.
* Give wait staff authority to cut off inebriated guests and have taxi phone numbers available.
* At hosted bars, the event host pays for drinks; at no-host bars, or cash bars, guests pay for drinks.
* Giving each guest 2 drink tickets helps control the amount a guest drinks.
* Need one bartender for every 75 to 100 people.

**Catering Equipment Needs**

* Clarify with the caterer the equipment/décor elements they provide vs. rental needs. Discuss quality expectations of provided/rental items.
* Provide one double-sided buffet line for every 75 to 100 people.
* Have beverage service ready 30 minutes prior to the start of event, with food ready 15 minutes prior, to avoid quality deterioration.
* When bringing a caterer onsite, check on their kitchen and water needs to ensure the chosen facility can accommodate them. For example, you may need to modify the menu if access to power or cooking space is limited.
* Check on the power requirements of all equipment the caterer is bringing/renting to ensure there is adequate power. Some appliances, such as coffee makers, can generate surges in electricity that can overwhelm circuits.
* Check with the Environmental Health & Safety Office to make sure appliance are approved.
* Ensure the removal of trash and recyclables is considered when discussing catering needs.
* Request additional trash cans for large events.