

WPI Conference & Event Services Office

Event Planning Guide

Purpose

The **Conference & Event Services Office (CESO)** coordinates events, ranging from department meetings and student programs to weddings, conferences, and large-scale campus events. The office works with campus partners—including Catering, Facilities, Audio Visual & Technology (AV), Campus Police, as well as external vendors—to ensure events are scheduled appropriately, supported effectively, and aligned with the university's priorities.

This planning guide outlines the policies and procedures for reserving and using WPI-owned spaces and help ensure a consistent and successful event planning experience.

Planning an Event

Event requests should be submitted as early as possible to maximize space availability and coordination of required resources.

All event requests must be submitted through [25Live](#) (internal) or via email (external)

A reservation is **not confirmed** until a 25Live confirmation has been issued.

When submitting a request, include:

- Event name and purpose
- Preferred date and time
- Requested location
- Expected attendance
- Sponsoring department or organization
- External speakers, performers, or artists (if applicable)
- Any anticipated resource or support needs in the comment section

If the requested space is managed outside the Conference & Event Services Office notify **your Event Planner** so necessary services can be coordinated.

The individual submitting the reservation will serve as the primary event contact. Any change in event contact should be communicated promptly.

The reserved space, and start/end time, must be used only for the approved purpose/timeframe.

[CESO website](#) provides planning tools including:

- Event Planning Checklist
- Suggested Planning Timeline
- 25Live Reservation Guide
- External Speaker form

University Closures and Holiday Scheduling

No events will be scheduled during the following university closures:

- Memorial Day Weekend (Saturday–Monday)
- Observed Juneteenth Holiday
- Observed Independence Day Holiday
- Thanksgiving Break (Wednesday at noon through Saturday)
- Winter Break (December/January campus closure)

During the following holidays, only limited internal student events may be approved with reduced campus support services:

- Labor Day
- Sunday following Thanksgiving
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Patriots' Day

When planning any event or meeting, please review all [holidays and observances](#) to ensure your guests are accommodated.

Internal vs External & Special Events

Internal events are focused on the WPI Community as the main target audience.

Internal conferences and events that are sponsored by an external entity, charge a registration fee, or are more than 50% external guests are subject to rental fees.

External events work directly with the Conference & Event Services Office regardless of their affiliation to WPI. These events are subject to university rental rates and applicable service fees.

Depending on the event, WPI may require:

- A certificate of insurance
- A reservation deposit
- Additional university approvals

Special events—including political or governmental events, film productions, and public movie screenings—require additional university review. Contact the **Conference & Events Office** before planning these events.

Personal events (such as weddings, showers, anniversaries, and celebrations) are considered external events.

Outdoor Events

Requests for outdoor events must include an inclement weather plan, such as:

- Rain-or-shine operation
- Indoor backup location
- Alternate date
- Event cancellation

Outdoor events must follow these operating procedures:

- **Disturbing university operations**, including academic, research, administrative, or other university activities is strictly prohibited. This includes loud music, shouting, etc.
- **Adhere to noise ordinance.** All events must follow the [City of Worcester's](#) noise ordinance policies.
- **Respect university and personal property** by avoiding vandalism, damage, or destruction.
- **Follow campus access requirements** by not blocking entrances, exits, roadways, or accessing restricted areas.
- **Securing outdoor locations.** Quad events past dusk must have Campus Police presence to block off quad access to vehicles.

External Speakers, Performers, and Artists

Events featuring external speakers, performers, or artists require university approval before a reservation can be confirmed.

Student Organizations work with Student Activities Office for approval

Faculty/Staff use this [form](#) that is to be signed by Provost or Department Head and sent to CESO

These events must comply with WPI's [External Speaker Policy](#).

Event Resources and Services

Resource needs should be included in the 25Live request whenever possible. If they are identified after submission, notify **CESO** as soon as possible.

The Conference & Event Services Office coordinates these services with the appropriate campus departments.

- **Catering**

[Chartwells](#) is the exclusive Caterer for WPI Campus. Catered meals/menus must be finalized 7 business days and final headcount 3 days prior to event. Meetings should be set up to discuss options well in advance of your event.

Student Organizations who are holding table sitting events that involve off campus food must obtain a food waiver 7 days prior to the sitting. Off campus food pertains to external restaurants or homemade (ie: bake sales)

Potluck: A Potluck style event is any event where personally made food from different people and places are brought to a common buffet area; served; and consumed by all.

These types of events are prohibited in any WPI room, space, or grounds.

- **Parking**

Event parking considerations must go through the Conference & Event Services Office.

Event Planners will work with Campus Police to determine the optimal location for external guest parking. NOTE: at certain times of the year, all external guest parking will be at Gateway Parking Garage. Should this be the determination, your department will work with CESO to procure a shuttle through Valet Park and charge to your Workday account.

- **Building access**

Should your event/meeting fall outside of regular business hours, building access will be coordinated through your Event Planner to campus card access.

- **Event Rentals**

For certain spaces and large-scale events, rentals may be required. This includes, but not limited to, chairs, tables, pipe/drape, linen, etc. CESO works with outside vendors as much coordination is needed and will charge your Workday account once the event concludes.

- **ATC Services and Equipment**

Work with your Event Planner on what a/v needs your event requires. ATC will provide services or work with an outside production company.

Guest WiFi instructions are found [here](#).

- **Campus Police**

Event Planners will work with Campus Police to determine if your event requires Police presence. This includes, but not limited to, guest count, time of year, location, VIP, and parking assistance.

- **Custodial services**

Event Planners will work with Facilities to determine if your event requires custodial detail(s). This includes, but not limited to, guest count, time of year, location, catering, set up needs.

- The Facilities Office works closely with CESO on a daily basis to ensure the success of events here on campus. To minimize duplications and ensure all requests are accounted for, please make sure to direct requests to the Events Office including requests for additional resources. They will enter work orders if necessary.
- Please be aware that last minute requests cannot be guaranteed. Events are generally finalized ten (10) days in advance, so any requests made later than that will be completed based on available resources and labor.

Alcohol Service

You must note on your event request that you intend to serve alcohol. Any event involving alcohol must receive prior approval from the **Conference & Event Services Office**.

Chartwells hold the liquor license on campus. No external alcohol is allowed on campus

Additional fees may apply, including:

- Campus Police details
- Bartender services
- Wait staff
- Custodial services
- Licensing fees

All events serving alcohol must comply with Massachusetts law, City of Worcester ordinances, and [WPI alcohol policies](#).

Tailgating

Tailgating is not allowed on WPI property including, but not limited to, parking lots/garages and quad/open green space.

Decorations, Paint/Powder, Tablesittings

Decorations:

- No hanging of materials or décor on walls in any space with tacks, staples, or nails. Painters tape is the only acceptable adhesive and can only be used on doors, not walls. **Higgins House is the exception.** Nothing is to be hung on any walls, curtains, etc at any time in this building.
- Battery-operated candles are permitted. Open-flame candles require prior approval from the **Conference & Event Services Office**.
- No confetti, glitter, or bubbles
- Floral and specialty linens and/or china go through Chartwells
- If you have specific decoration questions, please reach out to your event planner.

Paint:

Locations for paint nights or similar events using paint are outside locations to include the Quad, Higgins House lower lawn or Rubin Campus Center grass lawn.

Locations inside include Riley Commons, Alden Hall Great Hall stage, Odeum and CC stage area.

- A tarp is needed underneath the painting and to protect the flooring of the Odeum, Alden Hall Great Hall stage and CC stage.
- Acrylic or water based paints only.
- All paint water needs to be disposed of properly to avoid additional cleaning costs.

Tie-Dye or Powdered Colors:

- Outside use only: tie-dye or powdered colors
- Access to a water source is mandatory. This may include rental of a wash sink.
- Use of WPI restrooms to wash, rinse, or clean tie-dye or powder is strictly prohibited. Custodial charges may be incurred if indoor facilities are used and stained

Tablesitting (Indoor):

- **No cooking devices** are permitted for indoor tabling setups. This includes but is not limited to grills, toasters, electric burners or fryers.
- If you plan to **serve food**, all potential **allergens** (such as nuts, gluten, dairy, eggs, soy, sesame, and fish/shellfish) must be clearly labeled at your table.
- Contact **Chartwells** in advance for approval of **any** food distribution.

Tablesitting (Outdoor) :

Tables need to be checked out from the Campus Center Info desk with your WPI ID.

- If you need power, please reach out to the **Conference & Event Services Office**
- If you plan to **serve food**, all potential **allergens** (such as nuts, gluten, dairy, eggs, soy, sesame, and fish/shellfish) must be clearly labeled at your table.
- Contact **Chartwells** in advance for approval of **any** food distribution.

WPI Sponsored 5Ks

Please follow all [regulations and guidelines](#) for having 5K's on campus (WPI student organization and departments only)

Safety Procedures

Environmental Health and Safety:

All Events

Any event happening on WPI property must follow fire codes. This includes:

- Not exceeding the room or building capacity
- Not blocking egresses or exits with furniture, décor, etc
- Not covering or blocking fire exit signage
- Keeping a clear 36" path for exits
- All regulation and code questions should be directed to Environmental Health and Safety Office.

Large Events (over 300 people):

Announcements to be made regarding emergency exits and meeting locations for all large scale events.

- In person or recorded announcement can be made at event.

Grilling/Candles:

For any event that has a component that could be flammable, such as events with grills, cooking devices or religious events with pre-approved ceremonial candles, it is recommended that a fire extinguisher be present at the event. If you do not have access to a fire extinguisher, please reach out to Environmental Health and Safety to acquire one.

Fog/haze machines:

Approval from EHS, CESO, and/or SAO must be given 60 days prior to event. All costs associated with this type of effect will be charged to the sponsoring group.

Live animals at events:

The use or display of live animals on campus must have the approval of EHS, CESO, and/or SAO 90 days prior to your event.

Groups/departments must work with a fully licensed organization that provides live animals for entertainment.

Health, safety, and wellbeing of all involved (including the animals) must follow the guidance of EHS

Other:

WPI is a tobacco-free campus. Smoking and tobacco use are prohibited in all university facilities and grounds.

WPI is not responsible for lost, stolen, or unattended personal property.

Marketing and Publicity

WPI Logo/Branding:

Use of the Worcester Polytechnic Institute name or logo in advertising, promotional materials, or public announcements requires prior university approval.

- Materials distributed externally must clearly identify whether the event is sponsored by WPI.
- All WPI Marketing and Communications protocols outlined [here](#) must be followed.
- All event and directional signage for a WPI sponsored event must have WPI branding.

Posting and Chalking:

- Informational flyers and posters are allowed only on designated corkboards in buildings and on private office doors.

- Any posters or fliers posted on any outside structure without special permission from Facilities will be removed.
- Recognized student organizations may advertise events of campus-wide interest – including any event open to all students as well as fraternity and sorority events – with chalk **ONLY** on sidewalks and the Quad brick walkway.
- Each organization is responsible for removing the chalk within one week after the event takes place.
- All chalk must be washable "sidewalk" chalk, not classroom board chalk.
- Groups will be charged for any chalking that doesn't follow these guidelines.

Sandwich Boards:

- To sign out sandwich boards, please bring your WPI ID to the Campus Center Information Desk
- Poster printing for boards (24wx36h) can be done through SAO (student groups only) or ATC. 5 business days notice is recommended

Changes & Cancellations

Major event changes that affect space, services, or resources should be submitted **at least ten (10) business days** before the event.

Requests received after this deadline cannot be guaranteed.

If an event is cancelled:

- Notify **CESO** immediately.
- External event deposits are non-refundable when cancelled within thirty (30) days of the event.
- Groups that fail to cancel a scheduled event may be responsible for all associated costs.

Time, Place, and Manner of Activities & Events

All events on campus must comply with all WPI policies, rules and regulations. Such events must not interfere with University property or the orderly conduct of University affairs or the University's obligation to protect the right to teach, study, and freely exchange ideas. The core expectations for any individual or group using WPI property include the following:

- **Ensure activities comply** with all applicable federal, state, and local laws
- **Adhere to the confirmed start/end time.** Events must begin and end in accordance with reservation confirmation. Should extra time be needed, client must inform their Event

Planner within 7 business days of the event. Overtime charge may result from any event ending later than reservation.

- **Protect the safety of others** by avoiding threats, harassment, intimidation, violence, or any behavior that endangers individuals or groups.
- **Treat others with respect and civility** throughout the event.
- **Cooperate with university officials** and comply with directions from authorized personnel.
- **Avoid disrupting university operations**, including academic, research, administrative, or other university activities.
- **Respect university and personal property** by avoiding vandalism, damage, or destruction.
- **Follow campus access requirements** by not blocking entrances, exits, roadways, or accessing restricted areas.

Failure to comply with these expectations may result in immediate cancellation of an event. The University reserves the right to rescind permission for any event or activity, to reschedule any event to a different time or date, and/or to move an event or activity to a different location.

After the Event

- Events must end at reserved end time.
- Unless custodial services have been arranged, event organizers are responsible for returning the space to its original condition, including:
 - Returning furniture to its original layout
 - Wiping down of all tables and chairs
 - Removing all decorations and tape (painters tape only)
 - Collecting and disposing of all trash/food in proper receptacles
 - Leaving space clean and set for the next user
- Additional cleaning or repair costs may be charged if necessary.
- Internal groups will be billed directly by the departments providing services.
- External organizations and personal event clients will be invoiced by the **Conference & Events Services Office** according to current university rates.

Questions

For assistance with event planning, reservations, or university policies, contact the **Conference & Event Services Office** at **508-831-5613** or by email events@wpi.edu