How Inclusive Are Your Events?

Establishing the feeling of “welcome-ness” happens well before your actual event. There are things you should consider when trying to ensure your event recognizes diversity, equity and inclusion.

A good place to start is making sure your event date doesn’t conflict with religious/ethnic holidays. Ensure your venue is accessible and welcoming. Is your registration fee as fair and accessible as possible? When planning your menu, think about having vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free options. Ask on your registration form if anyone has a food allergy.

How do you ask about gender in your registration process? Have you considered asking, “How do you identify yourself?” Whom have you selected as your speaker(s)? If you are having a panel, have you considered diverse populations? One way to help with diversity and inclusiveness is to have a diverse planning committee. As SU President Charles Wight mentioned in his inaugural address “…the true test of inclusion is when we are willing to invite those to the table who disagree with us.”

Learn what you can about existing and potential attendees and make sure it’s reflected in your marketing materials. Are you using both audio and visual announcements? Are you using social media but also other advertisement methods - posters, fliers, personal approaches, etc.? Have you included contact information for anyone who needs a special accommodation? Is your event website ADA-compliant?

When formatting your presentation, have you considered using a large, uncomplicated font? Have you requested a platform for your speaker so everyone can see? Have you considered having an ASL interpreter? Does your event swag encompass a wide range of sizes? Where will you tell a breastfeeding attendee to go if they need to pump between sessions?

After the event, think about adding a specific question to your post-event survey regarding the success of your diversity and inclusion efforts. Ask how attendees heard about your event. Ask them what you could do for next year’s event to make sure they attend again.

I had an overnight group many years ago from a different country that was not familiar with using shower curtains because they didn’t have them where they were from. I learned the hard way (flooding!) that I shouldn’t take what I view as an obvious, everyday thing as being obvious and everyday for someone else.

You can’t possibly design an event that will fit everyone’s needs. However, the goal should be to plan an event that is free from obstacles that would make an interested attendee feel excluded or unwelcome. Try not to treat diversity as a buzzword; it’s a significant element of a well-planned and thought-out event.

—Lesley A. Staffeldt
Director of Conference Services and Facilities Reservations
The conference scheduled July 11-14 is for youth in grades 8-12. Participants will stay in campus residence halls, be able to tour the campus, engage in powerful conversations and attend workshops while bonding with other youth from across the Eastern Shore.

Why an African American Male Conference? It was developed due to the data and research that show the disparities in all systems (education, justice, etc.) that African American males endure. This conference seeks to motivate, educate and rejuvenate youth to deal with the adversity and pitfalls of society today. It is held purposefully in the middle of the summer to remind youth that while school may be out, learning never stops.

Workshops are led by African American men from a vast array of professions who are committed to encouraging education. This conference will be a memorable event for the youth as many of them have not been on a college campus.

For more information contact Doncella Wilson, LMSW, at boysconference@gmail.com or 513-463-7084.

Public Listening Session on Maryland LGBTQ History on the Eastern Shore

Preservation Maryland hosts a public forum and listening session about LGBTQ history in Maryland 6-8 p.m. Monday, June 10 at the Salisbury University Art Galleries Downtown. Everyone is welcome to attend and encouraged to come prepared to discuss local spots, like libraries, bars, churches, clinics, and private homes that have been important in their own lives and to the lives of LGBTQ people in Maryland.

As a part of its ongoing work in LGBTQ history, Preservation Maryland will host five public listening sessions across the state during Pride Month to help inform a forthcoming context study on LGBTQ history across the state. Preservation Maryland received funding from the Maryland Historical Trust to conduct a statewide historic context report on the important places and themes of LGBTQ life in Maryland.

The event is hosted in partnership with Salisbury PFLAG. For more information contact Preservation Maryland at info@presmd.org or 410-685-2886.