



## Virtual Event Guide for Students

This document offers guidance when beginning to plan a virtual event and highlights important steps to consider during the planning process. Note, this is a very high-level planning resource and will help if you are questioning where to begin. SLICE is happy to help with any of your event planning needs! To meet with a staff member please [complete this form](#).

### **Steps to consider when planning a virtual event:**

#### **Step 1: Develop virtual strategy and guiding principles for your event, then build out event proposal. Items to consider:**

- Goals
  - Important to identify the goal of the event, especially when moving an in-person event online or creating a new virtual opportunity. This will help determine the best steps to take moving forward
- Audience
  - Can broaden your audience since there are no space limitations (think globally!) Or focus on a more selective, intimate audience to create higher level of engagement
- Content
  - How is it relevant and timely? Relate to COVID-19 or current climate? ○ Will it bring value/meaning to attendees? Meant to educate and engage? Or more of a networking/social opportunity?
  - How is it unique to CMU?
  - Can you bring CMU to your audience?
- Date and time
  - For example, 12-1 p.m. EST is a typical choice, however, consider your audience. Will there be international attendees? Could content be delivered asynchronously?
- Format
  - Webinar, meeting or conference
  - Town hall, panel discussion, open forum, etc.
  - Live or pre-recorded
  - Length of program – typical attention span of 10 minutes before sharp decline, so consider adding elements to keep audience fully engaged
- Engagement Plan – how will you engage attendees?
  - Call to action
  - Q&A
  - Polling
  - Gaming or trivia/“did you know”
  - Are there ways to bring the event to your audience?
- Outline budget (if using virtual platform, working with Media Services or sending mailer ahead of time, etc.)

## **Step 2: Build virtual team**

- Outline roles
  - Virtual stage manager – event lead
  - Support for stage manager (optional but recommended, if possible)
  - Slide runner (optional but recommended, if possible)
  - IT support – i.e. Media Services (where relevant)
  - Emcee and/or moderator, depending on format
  - Engagement manager (where relevant)
  - Speakers/panelists
  - Speaker coach (optional but recommended, if possible)
  - Marketing team
- Set up rehearsals and prepare speakers (when relevant)

## **Step 3: Craft communication plan**

- Build invite list
  - Tease out elements and build in call to action
  - Email invitations, personalized outreach, reminders, website, social media, etc. ▪ Think about best date/time to send emails and post to social media ▪ Consider working with other teams to cross-promote, as it makes sense ▪ Perhaps send pre-event survey to gauge interest and promote enthusiasm/awareness
- Follow-up plans
- Record and send out and/or post on website
- Post-event email (consider two versions for those that attended and those who registered, but didn't attend); could include:
  - Event highlights
  - Resources discussed during event
  - Brief survey
  - Recordings
  - Promote upcoming events
  - Ways to stay connected

## **Step 4: Post-event debrief - analyze data collected to report overall metrics and help build next engagement**

- Registrants vs attendees
- Average time attendees spent in event (aka attendance rate)
- Engagement using polls and/or Q&A
- Target audience demographics
  - How many people? From where?
  - Consider expanding to include # of potential org members, first-time event attendees, college/school representation, etc.
  - Social media metrics
  - Email analytics (open rates, click through rates, etc., best performing for date/time)
  - Post event survey results (along with email/anecdotal/Q&A feedback)