



Office of University Events and Protocol
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Event Protocol Manual

The Event Protocol Manual was developed to provide process guidance through university-wide protocol that is applicable to all on-campus event planners. Special events and public VIP visits are opportunities to enhance the positive reputation of Georgia College and should be conducted with the highest level of professionalism.

Protocol is defined as the official procedure or system of rules governing affairs of state or diplomatic occasions. In event planning, protocol encompasses the formalities, etiquette, and guidelines one should adhere to when hosting or interacting with government officials or other organizational leaders. This also includes cultural etiquette and decorum.

Visiting Dignitaries and VIPs

Georgia College has a responsibility to ensure that VIP guests are given appropriate regard and security during their visit. To do this, it is essential that the Office of University Events and Protocol is consulted prior to the invitation being extended.

Dignitaries and VIPs can be defined as (but not limited to):

- President of the United States or spouse
- Current (or former) Heads of State or spouse
- University System of Georgia Chancellor, Vice Chancellor or Board of Regents
- Members of the United States congress (senator or representative)
- Ambassadors
- Milledgeville and Baldwin County elected officials
- Presidents of universities, colleges, and accrediting agencies
- Chief Executive Officers of major organizations
- High profile academics and invited speakers
- Senior public servants – military
- Georgia College Trustees
- Significant members of the public

The Visiting VIPs form can be found under GC Signatures or accessed [here](#).

Official Invitations to Campus

Prior to extending an invitation to any dignitary or public official, the Visiting VIP form must be completed. Upon its review, the President reserves the right to personally extend the invitation to campus. (*More information on invitation standards can be found below*).

If the President is to participate in the VIPs visit, the [President Attendance Request form](#) must also be completed and approved.

Once an invitation has been accepted, the Office of University Events and Protocol and University Communications will be available to provide guidance and assistance, where appropriate.

Overview of Special Events

- Prior to inviting public officials or VIPs to campus, approval must be received through the appropriate channels.
- Funding for special events is the responsibility of the university unit planning the event. Event needs and expenses may vary based on the event location and necessary protocols. The Office of University Events and Protocol has the authority to determine budget requirements.
- Planners should designate one day-of, on-site contact who will be accessible by phone at any time.
- When the President or President’s partner is participating in the event, planners will provide the appropriate event specific information four business days prior to the event.
- The protocols referenced in the manual are to be considered guidelines, but should be adjusted based on the necessity and appropriateness of the event and its guests.

Invitations

Guidelines

- Invitations should be consistent with the style, theme, or significance of the event.
- Invitations should always come from university officials, not Georgia College.

EXAMPLE:

President Steve M. Dorman invites you...

NOT

Georgia College invites you....

- Formal invitations should be sent via first-class mail.

Style Guide

The style guide information below is adapted from the book *Etiquette & Protocol, A Guide for Campus Events* by April Harris. Emily Post is an additional resource - <https://emilypost.com>

Line 1 University or Organization Logo

Only University approved logos should be printed

Line 2 The name of the Host(s)

“President,” “President and Spouse,” “President and Board of Trustees”

Line 3 Extends the invitation

“Requests the pleasure of your company” or “Cordially invites”

Line 4 Explains the type of event, usually in one of two words

“lunch,” “dinner,” “a reception,” “ribbon cutting”

Line 5 Purpose of the event

“in honor of,” “to welcome,” “to thank”

Line 6 The event date

For formal invitations, the entire date should be written out

“Saturday, November 21, 2020”

Days and months should not be abbreviated – use November, not Nov.

Line 7 The time of the event

For formal invitations, the times should be written out

“at six o’clock in the evening”

Line 8 Tell the place

Always include the full street address

For on campus events, include the building name and room information

“Magnolia Ballroom, Student Activities Center”

Save the dates may include only the town or University name

Line 9 Special instructions

This could possibly include dress code and parking information

Line 10 RSVP information

If you are not including reply cards, list the phone number of the person taking the RSVPs. In some instances, an email address will suffice.

If you are including a reply card, "RSVP card enclosed" should be printed.

The reply cards should include areas for the names of the guest(s), response, menu selection (if applicable) and payment information (if applicable). Always include space for dietary and accommodation requests.

Parking information and campus maps may be included on an invitation insert.

Printing

- Invitations from the President must be approved by the Office of the President two weeks prior to printing.
- The information for the University unit hosting the event should be printed on the flap of the invitation envelope.

Addressing

- Envelopes should be addressed in a legible, script font.
- There are many forms of address; using the correct honorific is a sign of respect. Great references include [Robert Hickey's On-Line Guide to Forms of Address](#), [April Harris' Correct on Campus](#), and [Emily Post](#).
- When in doubt, use the most formal option when addressing envelopes.

Seating Protocol - Meals

- Events attended by the University President should always have a prepared seating chart.
- The University President and honored guest should be seated at the head table (When creating the room layout, this should be labeled table 1,).
- Seating protocol should consider guest rank and status. This hierarchy is incredibly important when entertaining diplomats, political leaders, military officials, and religious leaders. Please consult the Office of University Events and Protocol or the online resources listed below for additional instructions.
- Regardless of the guest list, the highest-ranking guest should always sit immediately to the right of the host.
- Alphabetized escort cards should be available upon entrance to the event (for events with more than two tables). These cards should include the guest name, or couple name, and assigned table number.

Stage Protocol – Ceremonies and panels

- On stage, the American flag should always be placed in a position of honor, on its own right when facing the audience. No other flags should be displayed to the American flag's right.
- Every event has different needs, but seating on the stage (dias) should be reserved for the University President, University Administration, speakers, and honorees. Additional VIPs in attendance should have priority reserved seating on the first row.
- As with dining protocols, seating on the stage should be assigned by rank and status.
 - Seating should be established by rank from right to left (as you face the audience).
 - If the podium is located in the middle of the stage, the highest ranked person is seated immediately to the right of the podium (as you face the audience); and the next ranked person is to the left. Seating then alternates right and left in order of rank until all have been seated.

Safety and Security

The safety of our campus guests is paramount. Please be cognizant of possible safety and security concerns when confirming your event location and advertising to the public.

Many elected officials and foreign dignitaries travel with their own security. To ensure that safety concerns and preparations are correctly addressed, all outside security personnel should be directed to Public Safety. If deemed essential by the Georgia College Chief of Police or the Director of University Events and Protocol, Georgia College police officers may be required to be onsite.

If you expect media coverage due to the event or a specific guest, please contact University Communications.

Food and Beverage

Dietary Restrictions

- Once an invitation to campus has been accepted, it is appropriate to inquire if your guest has any dietary restrictions or preferences.
- When printed invitations are mailed, provide a location on the reply card for dietary restrictions to be provided. This should also be provided on online registration forms.
- It is imperative that all known dietary restrictions are observed as many are due to religious observations or medical allergies. The best practice is to provide a list of all known needs to the Sodexo Catering Manager; they will work with the Executive Chef to ensure that a high-quality entrée substitute is prepared.
- Harvard University has compiled a comprehensive list of dietary restrictions based on various religious observations and known food allergies. It can be found [here](#).

Alcohol

- All alcoholic beverages and bartenders must be provided by Sodexo; additional labor charges will apply.
- During events held at the Old Governor's Mansion, students, even if over the age of 21, are not permitted to consume alcohol.
- Public safety must be aware of any event where alcohol is present; additional labor charges may apply.

Parking

Reserved Parking

- A reserved parking place should be provided for all VIP guests on campus. This request should be made through the Guest Parking Pass form in Unify. Please be mindful of any possible conflicts or anonymity needs the guest may have in regard to printed parking signs.
- A campus map with directions to the assigned parking lot should be emailed to the guest in advance of their arrival. Various campus maps can be found [here](#).
- If appropriate, a staff designee should meet the guest in the parking lot to escort them to the meeting or event location.

Name Tags

- University employees should wear their university-issued name tag on the right side of their shirt or coat.
- The format of the printed name tag may vary based on event needs, but all names should be printed in large, easy-to-read, bold font. Handwritten name tags should be avoided whenever possible. If the guest is an alumnus of Georgia College, the class year must also be displayed.
- Name tags are not to be worn in cocktail or black-tie attire.
- Name tags should be removed for all professionally staged photos.
- Avoid name tags that have pins or may cause damage to the guest's attire. Branded lanyards may be an appropriate solution.

Georgia's Old Governor's Mansion

- The Old Governor's Mansion may only be used for receptions and events when the President of the university is present or permits. The Office of the President reserves the right to permit or refuse use of the Old Governor's Mansion for any event.
- The Office of University Events and Protocol will be responsible for ordering and coordinating food and beverage with Sodexo for any event in the Mansion.
- The organization or group sponsoring the event will assume all charges incurred by catering and decorating for the event. The Office of University Events and Protocol provides guidance on set up and decoration requirements to meet the expectations of the Mansion.
- A complete list of invitees and RSVPs will be supplied to the President's Office no later than 24 hours prior to the function.
- If university students are invited to the event, there will be no alcoholic beverages served at the event.
- If alcoholic beverages are served, Sodexo will be responsible for providing appropriately trained personnel to serve alcoholic beverages; and they will be responsible for ensuring that individuals they serve are identified as age appropriate for distribution of alcohol.

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