



COMMUNITY EVENT TOOLKIT

Tips and Guidelines
for Attending
Community Events

VALENCIA COLLEGE



VALENCIA COLLEGE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

serves as a liaison between the college and the Central Florida community.

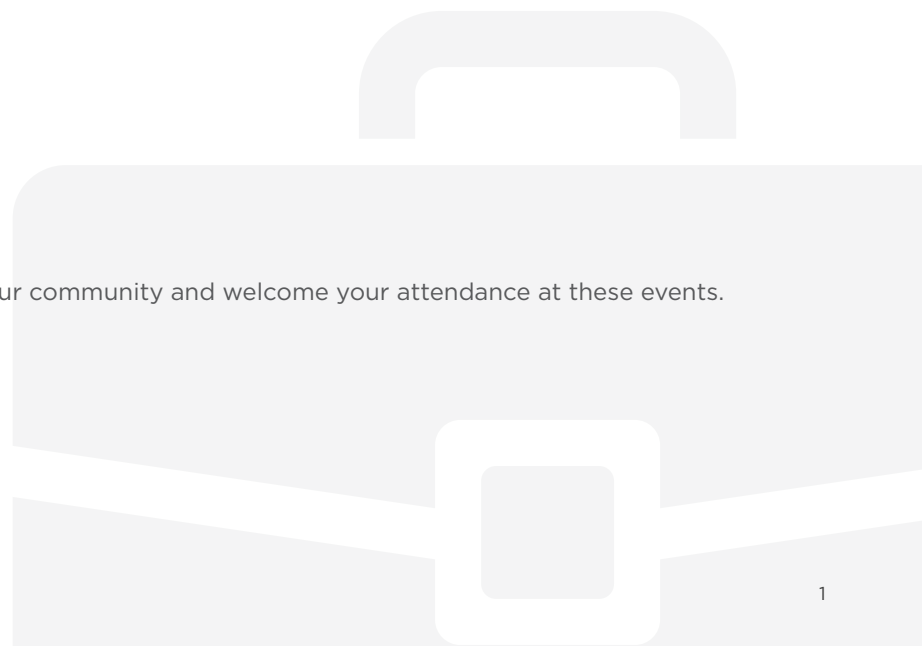
Sponsoring and attending events is an essential part of our community affairs work.

When attending an event on behalf of Valencia College, we want to make sure that you are equipped with the information needed to feel comfortable and put your best foot forward.

This toolkit will provide you with information about events, including:

- What to expect
 - Event process and format
- How to prepare
- How to network
- Event tips
- How to follow up

We encourage your participation in our community and welcome your attendance at these events.





WHAT TO EXPECT

Throughout the year, Valencia's Community Affairs team sponsors multiple events, ranging from breakfast and lunch events, to receptions and black tie galas. The sponsorships typically involve recognition of the college and include a table, or seating at the event.

EVENT PROCESS

Once we decide to sponsor an event, we begin to invite attendees.

Event seats may be filled by:

- Faculty, staff, students, those involved in the host organization, board members, community members and other friends of Valencia.

Community Affairs will confirm the names of attendees with the host organization. Some evening events may include the option to bring a guest; however, breakfast and lunch events typically do not include guests of attendees.

If a physical ticket is required for admission, the ticket will be sent—usually electronically—to the attendee in advance. Any additional information provided, such as information on parking and transportation, will also be sent prior to the event.

EVENT FORMAT

Many events have a 30- to 60-minute registration period prior to the start. This allows attendees to check in, get a name tag and table number, and mingle.

Here's what you can expect at many events:

- Breakfast and lunch events have a speaker program and/or panel discussion.
- Evening events usually include dinner and a program. Some may also provide entertainment or a silent charity auction. If an auction is included, you will receive a bid number at registration.

If you commit to attend an event on behalf of Valencia College, you are expected to stay for the program.

HOW TO PREPARE

The best way to prepare for an event is to review the invitation and other information you receive beforehand. It's also helpful to become familiar with the organization hosting the event, speakers, or any individuals being recognized or honored. This will make the event more meaningful for you, and may also spur topics of conversation.

Event preparation tips:

- Visit the organization's website to learn about what they do and who's involved
- Look up speakers' or award recipients' biographies on LinkedIn or Google
- Gain an understanding of awards or recognitions taking place

Goals for attending:

- Meet new people
- Learn something new about an organization or community initiative
- Reconnect with colleagues
- Nurture existing relationships
- Communicate information about Valencia or a specific program



Before attending an event, think about what you'd like to get out of it. Ask yourself questions, such as, "What connections can I make, what can I learn and how can this benefit my role at Valencia?"



HOW TO NETWORK

Events are great networking opportunities. They provide a chance to meet and interact with people from various industries, and help you grow both personally and professionally.

Some other key benefits to networking are:

- Getting to know people outside of your organization and/or field
- Learning more about the community
- Connecting with key influencers
- Expanding your knowledge
- Improving your interpersonal communication skills
- Raising your profile
- Increasing your number of contacts
- Exploring different non-profit organizations

Make Use of Registration Time

Some of the best networking opportunities occur during registration—the time before the event begins. Be sure to arrive early so you can take advantage of this extra time to network.

Give an Effective Introduction

When introducing yourself, think of a short, simple way to describe who you are and what you do. Keep it informal and interesting. If you're uncomfortable introducing yourself, ask a host or someone you know to connect you with other people you're interested in meeting.

When you meet someone, be sure to:

- Make eye contact
- Smile
- Say your name and role at Valencia
- Give a firm but brief handshake



Engage in Conversation

If you don't know what to say, ask questions. People generally like to talk about themselves. Asking open-ended questions is a great way to keep the conversation flowing.

Here are some examples:

- How are you connected to this organization?
- What do you enjoy most about what you do?
- How did you get involved in your field?
- What projects are you working on right now?

While talking with someone, be attentive and actively listen to what they have to say. You're networking, so it's okay to be brief and mingle with different people. When there's a natural break in conversation, you can say it was a pleasure meeting, exchange business cards and ask when it might be convenient to follow up.

Talk to People at Your Table

Your table is a great place for starting conversation, so be sure to introduce yourself to the people sitting around you. Having a lively table discussion makes any event more enjoyable.

Some topics for discussion may include:

- The event
- The organization hosting the event
- The food
- The college
- What the other person does

EVENT TIPS



Dress Appropriately

When you attend an event on behalf of Valencia, you are representing the college and should always dress appropriately. Some events provide suggested dress codes—black tie, formal or business casual. In all settings, even casual ones, remember to present yourself in a professional manner.



Wear a Nametag

Many events provide nametags; however, you can also wear your Valencia nametag if you have one. This makes it easy for people to approach you and start a conversation.



Bring Business Cards

Always bring more business cards than you think you'll need. While you don't want to give your card to every person you meet, be ready to exchange cards with someone you made a genuine connection with or if someone asks for your business card. You may also want to bring a pen and a small notebook to jot down some notes about the event or people that you meet.



Behave Appropriately

While events are fun and you should enjoy yourself, remember that you are representing the college and are expected to act appropriately at all times. This is particularly true at evening events, which often occur on the weekends and may include alcoholic beverages. Refrain from gossiping, talking during the presentation or venting about work. Stay positive, have a good time and act professional.



Social Media

It's appropriate to post photos and images of the event on social media. Photos and captions should be professional and indicate that you are there representing Valencia College.

HOW TO FOLLOW UP

Be sure to follow up with the people you meet at an event.



Here are several ways you can follow up with someone:

- Schedule a time for coffee or lunch
- Send an email or hand-written note
- Connect via LinkedIn or other professional networks
- Share the valenciacollege.edu/sayitforward card or website if someone has an interesting Valencia story to tell

You may want to follow up internally as well. If you meet a new Valencia colleague, be sure to connect via email after the event.

GET INVOLVED



Events and networking are an enjoyable way to meet new people, expand your network and learn more about the community. We encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities and participate in events that can help your professional and personal development.

We are all ambassadors of Valencia College, and it's a privilege to represent our organization in the community.

**For more information on community events,
visit valenciacollege.edu/communityaffairs**