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FILM INVITATIONAL COMPETITION

OCTOBER 16TH - OCTOBER 18TH
• NEW YORK CITY •

2024 • INVITATIONAL TEAM GUIDE

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A warm welcome to our 2024 Film Invitational team mentors and teachers! Now that you have officially registered for the competition it's time to start planning. This guide provides details to assist you with your preparation for both the competition and the festival weekend so that you can enjoy the best possible experience in New York City this October.

Film Invitational Dates & Details

Whether competing in the 3-Day Complete Experience or one of our 2-Day competitions, you can count on one thing: being busy! This means that planning ahead will be essential and we are here to help!

The competition officially begins on Monday, August 12th when we email all team leaders the Welcome Packet including the specific details for each competition, but you will likely want to begin your preparation well before this date. Below, we offer suggestions for making sure you have everything covered.

Establish Team Roles/Crew: Once your team leaders are locked in, you'll want to make sure that every participant has a clearly defined role and that all of the key positions of your production crew are accounted for. Clear expectations and responsibilities will make all the difference once you begin production in NYC, and this will also make assigning/organizing pre-production duties easier. There will inevitably be some dividing and conquering in NYC, with the editor(s) working at the hotel while the field crew shoots. Clear roles will result in maximum productivity. Smaller teams will likely require individuals performing several roles. Work to balance the effort by assigning tasks that are related and achievable.

Set a Schedule Before the Summer: Working with students during the summer months can be challenging, but our most successful FI teams find a way to make it work. Set a schedule for August before the end of the school year and make it a participation requirement that students attend planning sessions. Another option is to arrange periodic video calls so that team members can participate remotely.

Chaperones: Once your team leaders are locked in, you'll want to make sure that every participant has a clearly defined role and that all of the key positions of your production crew are accounted for. Clear expectations and responsibilities will make all the difference once you begin production in NYC, and this will also make assigning/organizing pre-production duties easier. There will inevitably be some dividing and conquering in NYC, with the editor(s) working at the hotel while the field crew shoots. Clear roles will result in maximum productivity. Smaller teams will likely require individuals performing several roles. Work to balance the effort by assigning tasks that are related and achievable.

Book Transportation and Lodging: Once your team is locked, this should be one of your first priorities. Booking early means cheaper travel rates at more convenient times and guarantees that you will have the best rooms in the best locations. Information about our discounted room block at the Hilton Midtown Hotel (also the site of the FI Editing HQ) as well as helpful advice is located in the planning guide.

Plan Ahead for Meals: FI teams are always on the go, which means it will be challenging to schedule meals. The good news is that NYC offers endless, abundant and affordable dining options in every neighborhood. Once you have your shoot schedule planned, search online for nearby options that fit your timing and budget (Google Maps is a great resource) and be sure to designate specific times to keep your team fueled up. If traveling with a large group and looking for a sit down meal, be sure to make reservations as NYC restaurants are almost always crowded. If your schedule is really tight, you can plan ahead and bring your meals with you (traveling with protein bars and bottled water or hitting up a 24-hour deli the night before). NOTE: Some teams plan their FI Shoot Schedules around famous NYC eateries to make sure they get the complete experience!

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Film Invitational Dates & Details (Cont'd)

Secure Shoot Locations and Professional Actors: Everything you do before coming to NYC will make a difference, and your actors and locations are no exception. Once your script is set, do your homework to secure authentic locations that provide the perfect setting for your story. You'll be surprised with how willing small businesses are to be involved- just be organized, clear and flexible when making your pitch. Steer clear of busy, loud and logo-filled locations that will make shooting and audio difficult (save these for b-roll!) and aim for settings that offer conditions conducive for filming. You may also want to consider people that you or your students know in NYC to secure private residences or businesses for locations. AAHSFF will also provide limited permits for select NYC locations. These will be first come, first served so once they're announced don't delay in confirming your time slot.

If possible, we strongly encourage you to utilize professional, age-appropriate actors in your production. You can use the free access to Backstage.com on our website to secure your actors, again, be sure to be organized, clear and flexible with your expectations. And you can ask for volunteers- many actors are eager to participate in any project and will be happy to help in exchange for the content for their personal portfolio reel. And don't neglect the preparation, even though you may be far away- plan video calls to do table reads and set a clear direction for your project. Of course, it is also fine to use student actors in your film, just make sure that the roles they perform are age-appropriate to maintain authenticity.

Keep It Simple: This may be the golden rule of the FI Competition. Trying to do too much often results in a project that simply can't be pulled off in 56 hours or less. Think about what is actually possible in script, scope, locations, etc. and plan accordingly. Focus on the story and emotional connection with the audience while doing more with less. Overly complicated scripts and too many locations have caused good teams to fail. Be realistic and keep it simple.

Prep Your Gear: Remember the golden rule: Keep it simple. You'll likely be moving around a lot. What do you really need, what can you do without? What can your crew realistically carry? Prepare a detailed list of gear, including related post production equipment, and don't forget extra batteries and memory cards as well as gear to protect your tech in the event of inclement weather. If traveling with your gear is a concern and you have a budget, we've got you covered. The Welcome Packet contains recommended rental houses that will happily supply all of your needs. In addition, we're working with a few partners who will be offering a selection of optional equipment that you can borrow (for free) for your shoot.

Get Organized: What do professional crews do to prepare for a shoot? A lot. Time is almost always an issue on any set and in the edit bay, so do everything you can to make sure your team is organized. Assign one team member the task of creating detailed call sheets and shot lists and schedule team reviews before coming to NYC. Plan for the unexpected with realistic alternatives and Plan B scenarios.

Practice, Practice Practice: Okay, another golden rule... Preparation is key and that means practicing all aspects of the production before you arrive in NYC. Why not spend 56 hours at home attempting a replica of what you want to achieve in NYC? We guarantee you will learn a lot that will help make you more successful once the competition arrives. We have several teams that do this, even recreating the winning FI film from the previous year to get a feel for what it takes to truly excel.

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Film Invitational Dates & Details (Cont'd)

FI HQ and Apple: All teams are welcome (but not required) to utilize our Editing HQ at the Hilton Midtown Hotel and Apple Assistance (for teams editing in Final Cut) throughout the competition. All teams electing to use the Editing HQ will be provided with an editing station including table and chairs, access to power and wifi and direct access to the AAHSFF team who will be available to answer questions and provide support. Teams that wish to edit at an alternate location are welcome to do so, but keep in mind that the official drop-off location for the final competition submissions will be at the Editing HQ. Teams editing with Final Cut Pro can take advantage of comprehensive Apple Support including online training sessions, and fully loaded iMac editing stations with Apple Tech Support at the Editing HQ.

Registration required for both the HQ and Apple Support – details in the Welcome Packet provided on **August 12th**.

Deadlines: The deadline for all competition film submissions is **Friday, October 18th at 4pm EST** at the Editing HQ located at the Hilton Midtown Hotel. All deadlines are strictly enforced. Make sure that you begin your export early and leave enough time to travel to the drop-off location if editing remotely.

FI Screenings: All 3-Day Complete Experience Films will be screened at the AMC Theater on Sunday, October 20th. This is your chance to see your film on the big screen at the busiest movie theater in America and your chance to see the films created by the other teams! It's an awesome, energetic event that is a must for all FI teams! *Best efforts will be made to screen all FI submissions (both 2-day and 3-day) TBD based on the number of teams competing and our available screen time.

Enjoying the Festival:

The All American High School Film Festival offers a wonderful opportunity for video production programs to explore the creativity of the best student filmmakers from around the world. For many students, the festival experience is life-changing. It's the biggest weekend of their life, a chance to showcase their work, celebrate their accomplishments and connect with others who share their passion. And for the teachers, the festival offers an unparalleled opportunity to see where the bar is set, generate new ideas for the classroom, connect with peers and discover relevant and accessible resources.

And for our Film Invitational Teams, the festival offers the perfect compliment to the frenzy of the competition: A chance to unwind, reflect and further bond while engrossed in the best of student filmmaking.

Of course, as a teacher preparing to bring a group of students to New York City, you probably have a lot of questions about attending the festival. We are here to help! In this document you will find useful information related to planning your festival weekend so that you can be sure to get the most out of your festival experience. The information includes: Festival Events, Dates, Times and Locations, Ticketing Recommendations, Hotel Accommodations, Logistics and Travel Advice, Dress Codes and more.

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Festival Events, Dates, Times and Locations:

We work hard to curate a robust variety of programming for ALL attendees, focusing on equal parts education and entertainment. On the first page you'll find an overview of our 2024 Event Schedule. Leading up to the festival, we will continue to provide an up-to-date, comprehensive schedule of all festival events on our website. This will help you navigate the wide variety of events we offer so that you can plan an agenda that fits your schedule and budget. We strongly suggest reviewing the dates, times and locations of specific events that interest you so that you don't miss one minute of the action!

Ticketing Recommendations

Most FI Teams purchase the All-Access or Elite All-Access Pass so that they can take advantage of all that the festival has to offer. The Elite All-Access Pass keeps the students immersed in activities throughout the weekend, beginning with the Friday Night Photo Walk and epic Dinner and Dance Cruise straight through the Teen Indie Awards Show on Sunday Night.

Although the entire festival experience is designed for the young filmmakers (providing a wide variety of resources, entertainment and networking opportunities to help them improve their craft and form meaningful and productive relationships to pursue their passion) we also provide many opportunities for educators to explore resources, including the vast higher education and career options and professional sessions on hyper-relevant topics (We host the nation's largest film and media college fair, an interactive exhibitor and technology showcase and a variety of industry-insider panels and workshops). The festival is also a great way for you to connect with other video production and media educators via our networking events and daily educator breakfasts. With the All-Access Pass, you can experience all of the events with your students, or give them the freedom to check things out on their own while you plan a separate itinerary of the events and resources that interest you. The majority of our events are organized in ticketed, private locations, and students are actively engaged all weekend, so you can feel confident in letting them enjoy an independent festival experience while remaining close to check in periodically.

Ultimately, your exact festival agenda is up to you. But you certainly won't feel out of place if you decide to soak it all in. We offer a wide variety of ticketing options so that you can enjoy some or all of our diverse events. Of course, the Opening Night Dinner Cruise and Teen indie Awards Show are a great excuse to explore New York City, get dressed up and walk the red carpet as you celebrate the achievements of all of the amazing young artists we represent. To explore all of your ticket options, head over to hsfilmfest.com/tickets.

- *All attendees must purchase tickets to attend events.
- **The Opening Night Dinner Cruise includes a full buffet dinner and unlimited soft drinks!
- ***We offer a free lunch on both Saturday and Sunday at the AMC Theaters!

Hotel Accommodations:

We have secured a special discounted room block at the Hilton Midtown Hotel conveniently located a few blocks from the AMC Theater and steps away from all major public transit options. These rates are far cheaper than any you will find in NYC during October and we highly recommend taking advantage of our discounted room block to be fully involved in all festival activities.

*Hotel rates DO NOT include sales tax of 14.75% and \$3.50 per night state occupancy charge. Maximum of 4 per double room (quad occupancy). NOTE: The discounted room block closes on September 23rd and sells out early each year. If the Hilton room block sells out, we will do our best to secure additional discounted rooms at another hotel property. For the most up to date hotel information and to book your room, visit hsfilmfest.com/hotels.

DISCOUNTED HILTON HOTEL RATE

TRADITIONAL GUEST ROOM

Max Guests: 2 

\$309

Average nightly rate
+Taxes & Fees

TRADITIONAL ROOM DOUBLE

Max Guests: 4 

\$309

Average nightly rate
+Taxes & Fees

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Logistics and Travel Advice:

Whether you're flying in from Japan or jumping on a bus for a group road trip, getting in and around New York City is easier than you think. Detailed maps (including directions) of all venues and locations will be posted on our website leading up to the festival weekend. We do our best to host the majority of our events in one-stop, centralized locations. This means less time traveling and more time enjoying festival events. That said, as our festival programming grows, we have had to expand to a few additional locations around the city, but all of these venues are easily accessible via public transportation and you can access all major transit lines right outside of the Hilton Hotel.

The Hilton Midtown Hotel is also the pick-up/drop-off location for our round trip Private Coach Bus transportation to and from the Kings Theater in Brooklyn. The Kings Theater is a bit further away than our other venues (about 40 minutes via bus or subway), but once you step inside you will understand why it is the ideal home for our Teen Indie Awards Show. You can purchase round trip tickets for the bus or choose to take the subway, taxi, Uber or Lyft. You can purchase your bus passes at hsfilmfest.com/tickets.



**COACH BUS TO
TEEN INDIE AWARDS**

\$40
Per person

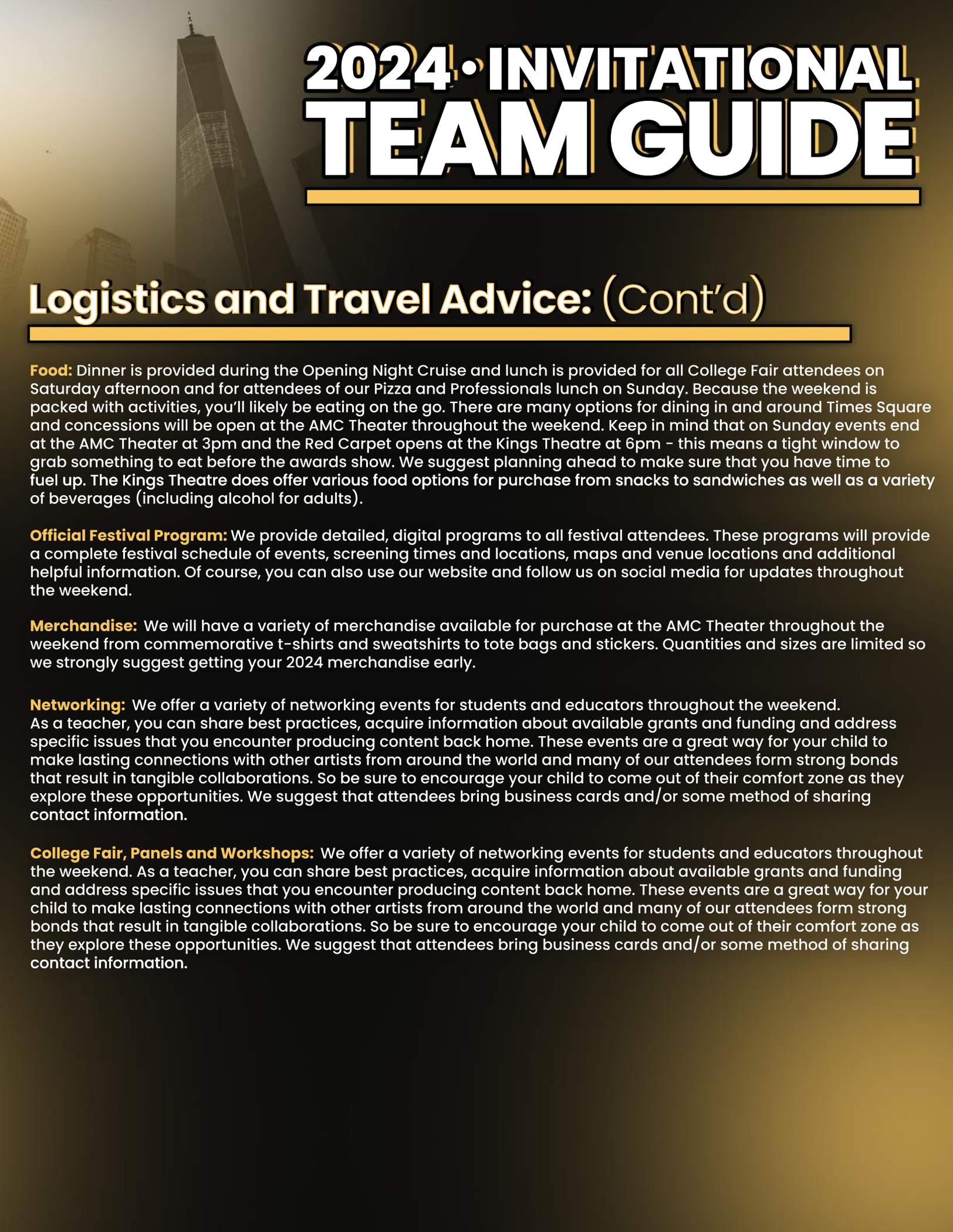
Airports: John F Kennedy Airport, LaGuardia International Airport, and Newark International Airport are less than an hour from the Sheraton Times Square Hotel and both offer a wide variety of airport/hotel transfer options depending on your budget. We suggest taking public transportation or exploring shuttle and ride share options as the most affordable transportation methods. Of course, you can always take a taxi, Uber or Lyft.

Ground Transportation: John F Kennedy Airport, LaGuardia International Airport, and Newark International Airport are less than an hour from the Sheraton Times Square Hotel and both offer a wide variety of airport/hotel transfer options depending on your budget. We suggest taking public transportation or exploring shuttle and ride share options as the most affordable transportation methods. Of course, you can always take a taxi, Uber or Lyft.

Dress Code: The majority of our events are casual with the exception of the Opening Night Dinner and Dance Cruise and Teen Indie Awards Show. For most events, plan on comfortable attire with comfortable walking shoes (keep in mind that you'll be watching movies and likely doing a lot of walking).

Our Opening Night Dinner Cruise does not have a formal dress code, but most attendees prefer to get a bit dressed up in "party" attire for the photo opportunities and networking. Think: Part dance party, part "I'm a hip young artist ready to show off my style." Our Teen Indie Awards Show is a formal event so be sure to dress to impress. We don't require black tie/tuxedos but all attendees are expected to wear formal attire. This typically means suits and ties and/or prom-type dresses. Don't be surprised if you see a fair amount of tuxedos and truly unique stylings!

Handicap Accommodations: All of our venues are handicap accessible but may require a little additional planning to make sure that you have the best possible experience. If you have unique needs please let us know and we will do everything we can to make your experience comfortable and convenient.



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Logistics and Travel Advice: (Cont'd)

Food: Dinner is provided during the Opening Night Cruise and lunch is provided for all College Fair attendees on Saturday afternoon and for attendees of our Pizza and Professionals lunch on Sunday. Because the weekend is packed with activities, you'll likely be eating on the go. There are many options for dining in and around Times Square and concessions will be open at the AMC Theater throughout the weekend. Keep in mind that on Sunday events end at the AMC Theater at 3pm and the Red Carpet opens at the Kings Theatre at 6pm – this means a tight window to grab something to eat before the awards show. We suggest planning ahead to make sure that you have time to fuel up. The Kings Theatre does offer various food options for purchase from snacks to sandwiches as well as a variety of beverages (including alcohol for adults).

Official Festival Program: We provide detailed, digital programs to all festival attendees. These programs will provide a complete festival schedule of events, screening times and locations, maps and venue locations and additional helpful information. Of course, you can also use our website and follow us on social media for updates throughout the weekend.

Merchandise: We will have a variety of merchandise available for purchase at the AMC Theater throughout the weekend from commemorative t-shirts and sweatshirts to tote bags and stickers. Quantities and sizes are limited so we strongly suggest getting your 2024 merchandise early.

Networking: We offer a variety of networking events for students and educators throughout the weekend. As a teacher, you can share best practices, acquire information about available grants and funding and address specific issues that you encounter producing content back home. These events are a great way for your child to make lasting connections with other artists from around the world and many of our attendees form strong bonds that result in tangible collaborations. So be sure to encourage your child to come out of their comfort zone as they explore these opportunities. We suggest that attendees bring business cards and/or some method of sharing contact information.

College Fair, Panels and Workshops: We offer a variety of networking events for students and educators throughout the weekend. As a teacher, you can share best practices, acquire information about available grants and funding and address specific issues that you encounter producing content back home. These events are a great way for your child to make lasting connections with other artists from around the world and many of our attendees form strong bonds that result in tangible collaborations. So be sure to encourage your child to come out of their comfort zone as they explore these opportunities. We suggest that attendees bring business cards and/or some method of sharing contact information.