

University Commencement Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, October 4, 2017
12:15 p.m.
President's Board Room, 210 Burruss Hall

Present: Diane Zahm (chair), Janice Austin, Tanyel Turkaslan Bulbul, Austin Compton, Jamie Cowell-Lucero, Jay Crone, Rebecca Funk, Scotland Leman, Billy Lin, Kelly McCann, Cheryl Peterson, Chris Saunders, Steve Sheetz, & Anthony Watson

Absent: Monty Abbas (with notice), Deborah Dickerson, PJ Johnston, Lance Jones, & Michael Stowe (with notice)

Guests: Mac Babb, Jonathan Caldwell, Tom Gallemore, Lara Khansa, Kristina Lundquist, Darryl McCallum, Peter McCann, Christina McIntyre, Margie Murray, April Myers, Kim O'Rourke, Hope Reynolds, Rick Sparks, Dan Taylor, & Pam Vickers

Dr. Zahm called the meeting to order at 12:15 p.m.

Adoption of Agenda

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the agenda. The motion carried.

Announcement of Approval of May 3, 2017, minutes

Zahm announced that the minutes of May 3, 2017, have been voted on and approved electronically.

Introductions

Introductions were made so that everyone could become familiar with each other.

Recap of Spring Ceremonies

Christina McIntyre apologized for letting the honors students process before they were supposed to begin walking.

Kelly McCann indicated that the rain plan for the student lineup did not work. There were too many students overall, and many arrived late, which caused issues with the processional and gaps in the seating. In the future, students will be lined up in the parking lot, regardless of the weather.

Kelly McCann also indicated that there needs to be more coordination with the Rhino staff (event security), especially when checking students in the tunnels. Zahm stated there was an issue with Rhino staff not allowing family members to take the elevators up to the wheelchair areas in the towers. Ushers were taking entire families with those in wheelchairs. One guest was directed to sit with the person in the wheelchair, and the other guests were directed to sit in the stands below the wheelchair area. Zahm also indicated that it would be good for ushers in the ADA areas to have radios so that they can update others on the availability of ADA seating.

Kim O'Rourke reported that there were many complaints that the Graduate School ceremony is too long. It was also stated that it was very hot in the coliseum. A suggestion was made to have a separate hooding ceremony for the Ph.D. candidates. Janice Austin will take these concerns back to the Dean of the Graduate School and will report back to the committee at the November meeting. The length of the Graduate School ceremony is not usually a concern for the fall ceremony.

Kelly McCann suggested having a run-through with staff who are involved the day of the ceremonies. They may not be aware of plans that are discussed during the Commencement Committee meetings.

Several options were discussed for the order of speakers.

Saunders made a suggestion to not display the flag on the Jumbotron during the singing of the National Anthem because he felt it looks tacky. He proposed focusing the camera on the Color Guard instead during this time.

Planning for Fall ceremonies

Chris Saunders indicated that the class officers will work on getting recommendations for the University Commencement speaker. Saunders asked if these recommendations should be faculty members. Zahm indicated that typically the fall speaker is a Virginia Tech faculty member. Saunders will work on getting three names to propose for the keynote speaker and the names of the student speakers. O'Rourke informed the committee the newly elected Governor of Virginia will be invited to be the spring Commencement speaker, per tradition. A suggestion was made to look beyond Virginia in order to have a speaker that excites the students. O'Rourke noted that Virginia Tech does not pay an honorarium to Commencement speaker; being asked to speak is an honor.

Zahm indicated that the call for ushers and marshals will go out on November 1. The fall ceremonies will be on Thursday, December 21, 2017, this year so the rehearsal will on Wednesday, December 20, 2017, at 4:00 p.m. in Cassell Coliseum.

With no other business, a motion was made to adjourn at 12:43 p.m.