

University Commencement Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, September 7, 2011
12:15 p.m.
President's Board Room, 210 Burruss Hall

Present: Dan Taylor (chair), Commander Michael Weaver for Randy Fullhart, Sandy Bass, Tom Broyles, Tyler Campbell, Candi Clemenz, Rebecca Funk, Pat Goodrich, Larry Hincker, Dean Stauffer for Jason Holliday, Tamara Knott, Joe Merola, Rosemary Blieszner for Jacqueline Nottingham, Kim O'Rourke, Masoud Safdari, Durelle Scott, Anthony Watson

Absent Mike Ellerbrock (with notice), Elizabeth Fine, Bill Green, David Shuster (with notice), Muzaffer Uysal

Guests: Captain Houston, Kevin Ayoub, Natalie Hart, Margie Murray, April Myers, Pam Vickers, Laura Wedin

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

Announcement of Approval of April 6, 2011 minutes

Taylor announced that the minutes of April 6, 2011, have been voted on and approved electronically.

Introductions

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

Debriefing of Spring Ceremonies

The Spring 2011 University ceremony ended early due to inclement weather.

Merola informed the committee that the gates to the south end zone tunnels were locked which caused a delay in the start of the procession. The honors students had already marched down the field and had to wait several minutes before the processional began.

Knott suggested better instructions need to be given to faculty members in case of inclement weather.

Wedin informed the committee that one of the class officers was stopped by a member of the RMC security group while trying to get to the reserved seating area on the field for class officers. A suggestion was made to give the class officers credentials so that security will be aware that these students have reserved seating. Ayoub suggested that a representative from RMC should attend the rehearsal or a walk-through prior to the ceremony to go over special logistics. Wedin then informed the committee that she and a class officer were stopped trying to enter the Merryman Center on the Spring Road side before the Fall ceremony. Captain Houston indicated that he would check into this and make sure that there will not be any issues in the future.

O'Rourke informed the committee that the students had trouble picking up just one of the new single-page programs as they processed through the tunnels. The flyers would stick together and the students were struggling to take just one flyer. This caused the processional to be slower than usual. The stage party started handing out flyers to the students as they processed in to speed up the processional. Broyles informed the committee that they ran out of programs that are handed out to the guests at the University and the Graduate School ceremonies. Murray indicated that there were more undergraduates participating in the University ceremony than in past spring ceremonies. She then indicated that she will review the numbers for the upcoming Spring ceremonies and will increase them if needed.

Proposed Scheduling Changes for Spring 2012

Taylor informed the committee that inclement weather has affected the past two Spring University ceremonies. There has also been a chance of inclement weather for the past several years. Margie Murray has been working with various colleges and departments on a new schedule for the Spring 2012 Commencement ceremonies.

After several drafts, the following schedule was proposed:

<u>Thursday</u>		
College Ceremony Practices	Burruss Hall Auditorium	???
Commencement Portrait Sitting	Holtzman Alumni Center, Library	10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Lavender Achievement Ceremony	Squires Student Center, Old Dominion Ballroom	11:00 a.m.
Senior Grad Bash	Holtzman Alumni Center Lawn	12 p.m. - 3 p.m.
Donning of the Kente Achievement Ceremony	Graduate Life Center, Multipurpose Room	2:00 p.m.
Hispanic-Latino Achievement Ceremony	Squires Student Center, Recital Salon	4:30 p.m.
Awards Dinner	The Inn at Virginia Tech, Latham Ballroom	6:00 p.m.
<u>Friday</u>		
Graduate School Commencement Ceremony	Cassell Coliseum	8:30 - 10:30 a.m.
University Commencement Ceremony	Lane Stadium/Worsham Field	12:00 noon.
Psychology	Burruss Hall, Auditorium - diploma pickup on Saturday	4:00 p.m.
Communication	Cassell Coliseum - diploma pickup on Saturday	4:00 p.m.
Human Development	Squires Student Center, Commonwealth Ballroom - diploma pickup on Saturday	4:00 p.m.
VA-MD Regional College of Veterinary Medicine	Squires Student Center, Commonwealth Ballroom	7:00 p.m.
CORPS OF CADETS COMMENCEMENT & ROTC COMMISSIONING CEREMONY	Burruss Hall, Auditorium	7:00-9:00 p.m.
<u>Saturday</u>		
College/Departmental Ceremonies		
Architecture and Urban Studies - no to Friday	Burruss Hall, Auditorium	8:30 a.m.
Political Science and International Studies - no to Friday	Burruss Hall, Auditorium	11:00 a.m.
Biological Sciences - no to Friday	Burruss Hall, Auditorium	1:30 p.m.
Pamplin College of Business	Cassell Coliseum	8:30 a.m.
Agriculture and Life Sciences	Cassell Coliseum	11:00 a.m.
Engineering	Cassell Coliseum	2:00 p.m.
History	Squires Student Center, Commonwealth Ballroom	8:30 a.m.
Religion and Culture	Squires Student Center, Commonwealth Ballroom	11:00 a.m.
English	Squires Student Center, Commonwealth Ballroom	1:30 p.m.
Natural Resources and Environment	Squires Student Center, Commonwealth Ballroom	4:00 p.m.
Incomplete Schedule--Only Large Spaces Noted		

Moving the Graduate School ceremony to 8:30 a.m. on Friday will allow the University Ceremony to begin at 12:00 noon. There is a better probability of not having inclement weather during the University ceremony at the proposed time, but if there is inclement weather, the hour-long ceremony can be delayed until 2:00 p.m.

Taylor stated that having some of the larger ceremonies on Friday evening will help keep the larger venues to three ceremonies on Saturday, thus eliminating all but one late afternoon

ceremony on Saturday, and it will move all ceremonies out of War Memorial Gym (the least desirable venue).

Wedin informed the Committee that the Grad Bash is held on the Thursday prior to Commencement, and the celebration is moved to the Commonwealth Ballroom in the Squires Student Center if there is bad weather. She questioned whether the ballroom will still be available to use if needed since the new schedule has department ceremonies scheduled in that space on Friday evening. Ayoub indicated that he would review the schedule and get back to Wedin if there are any issues.

Murray indicated that Communication, Psychology and Human Development have indicated that they prefer moving to Friday because they will have a much nicer venue. She also indicated that the College of Veterinary Medicine has not been consulted yet, but their ceremony was held on Friday evening several years ago. Funk indicated that she will take the proposal back to the College of Veterinary Medicine for review. It was also noted that diplomas will not be available for the college and departmental ceremonies that will be held on Friday. Those students will be able to pick up their diplomas on Saturday. Stauffer indicated that the College of Natural Resources and Environment would be happy to move out of War Memorial Gym. Stauffer also expressed a concern that faculty may not want to participate in an evening ceremony. Ayoub stated that he would get back to the College of Natural Resources and Environment on the exact costs for the use of Squires. Murray indicated that the schedule changes will only be for one or two years because there will be space in the new Arts Center once it is completed.

The proposed schedule will keep the evening ceremonies to a minimum which will require one less setup for the physical plant staff.

Scott asked if there has been any consideration about the repercussions for guests who are traveling that may have initially arrived on Friday afternoon. A suggestion was made that the family lodging in residence halls might be extended to include Thursday night along with Friday and Saturday nights. Wedin then informed the Committee that she heard that hotels in the area were going to start requiring a three-night minimum for Commencement weekend. Hincker indicated that if the area hotels start requiring a three-night minimum the university will need to work with the tourism bureau to keep the requirement to a two-night minimum only. O'Rourke noted that the Inn at Virginia Tech had previously committed to a two-night minimum, and she will work with them to find an affordable solution for families, such as allowing families the flexibility of Thursday arrival/Saturday departure or Friday arrival/Sunday departure.

Ayoub asked that there be more time scheduled between the ceremonies in Burruss Hall Auditorium on Saturday. He requested that the ceremonies begin at 8:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m., and 2:30 p.m. This will allow for more time to get guests in and out of the Burruss Hall Auditorium after each ceremony.

With no other discussion Taylor asked for a motion to be made to accept the proposed schedule change for recommendation to the President. Merola moved to recommend the proposed schedule change to the President for approval. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Planning for Fall Ceremonies

Watson indicated that both practice gyms are currently available to use as staging areas for the graduates. He will advise the Committee if this changes.

With no other business, O'Rourke moved to adjourn at 1:06 p.m.