

MINUTES

Commencement Committee Meeting Wednesday, April 2, 2025 Noon – 1 p.m. Zoom

Present: Diane Zahm (presiding), Anthony Watson, Dixie Watts Dalton, Jeanette Biczal, Jennifer Cleveland, Jodie Brinkmann, Keith Thompson, Marlena McGlothlin Lester, Monica Kimbrell, Rachel Miles, Stewart Scales, Vito Scarola, Janice Austin

Absent with Notice: Michelle Seref

Absent: Pascha Gerni, Lance Jones, Princess Merritt, Kayla Moten, Kim O'Rourke, Michael Stowe, Monecia Taylor, Jennifer Thomas, James Weger, Aqab Zahoor

Guests: Brittany Schulz, Cara Walters, Ginny Wagg, John Jackson, Lisha Henshaw, Milford Palmer, Rebecca Jones, Andrew Marinik, Eryn Giegel, Jessie Richards, Ciji Good, Erin Hand

Diane Zahm called the meeting to order at 12:02 p.m. A quorum was present.

1. Announcement of approval and posting of minutes of 3/5/25 meeting.

Diane Zahm noted that minutes from the Committee's previous meeting, 3/5/25, were approved electronically and can be publicly accessed on the Governance Website: governance.vt.edu

2. Spring Ceremonies Schedule

A brief review of the schedule for commencement ceremonies for each college, the university, and graduate school was conducted. With no questions or concern about the schedule no additional discussion took place.

3. Spring Volunteer Update

Diane Zahm reviewed the current status of volunteer signups for ceremonies. A reminder was given to everyone to visit the shared document and add any pertinent information for their volunteers if any is missing.

4. Commencement Speaker Update

- Regina Dugan will serve as the keynote speaker for University Commencement on Friday, May 16.
- Student Speakers for University Commencement have not yet been decided on but their information will be sent to the Office of Special Events to be shared for the purposes of crafting the president's remarks during the ceremony.
- Graduate School student speakers have not yet been selected.

5. Commencement Committee Membership Changes

Diane Zahm proposed changes to the membership structure of the Commencement Committee.

Currently, the positions of Director of Procession and Director of Ushers are vacant. She noted that usher duties are now primarily handled by Rhino Security, and procession responsibilities are typically managed by staff. Given this, Diane recommended removing both positions from the official membership of the committee.

She shared that a draft resolution to this effect had been sent to Kim O'Rourke. Kim advised that the resolution would need to go through the Commission on Faculty Affairs. Diane Requested the committee's approval to move forward with submitting the resolution to the Commission. No objections were raised.

A motion was raised by Keith Thompson to approve and was seconded by Jennifer Cleveland. The motion was approved by the full committee. The resolution will be forwarded to the Commission on Faculty Affairs.

6. Other Items

- Jennifer Cleveland asked if there would be a link available for online viewing of various commencement ceremonies. Erin Hand noted that all information is due from the colleges to Production Services by April 25 so these links would be available after this date.
- Kim O'Rourke suggested that it would be beneficial for attendees to have access to the QR code for digital programs prior to the event day, as it can be challenging to open the link when multiple people are connected to the stadium's Wi-Fi. Erin Hand responded that this could be addressed with the communications team during the upcoming implementation meeting to explore the possibility of including a link to the digital program in one of the pre-commencement email pushes.
- Kim O'Rourke inquired about the music that will play before the ceremonies and whether anything will be shown on the jumbotron as guests arrive. Erin Hand noted that there is a playlist with Production Services for the period of time prior to each ceremony's start and that some colleges are creating their own playlists to share with Production Services for their individual ceremony. She confirmed as well that the Communications team would have the usual tag board and standard congratulatory slides displayed on the jumbotron.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:16 p.m.