

**University Commencement Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, November 3, 2010**  
**12:15 p.m.**  
**President's Board Room, 210 Burruss Hall**

**Present:** Dan Taylor (chair), Bill Stringer for Jerry Allen, Jactone Arogo Ogejo, Sandy Bass, Tom Broyles, Jeffrey Connor, Elizabeth Fine, Pat Goodrich, Larry Hincker, Jason Holliday, Jong Kim, Ann Marie Knoblauch, Nathan Lavinka, Gary Long, Jacqueline Nottingham, Kim O'Rourke, Kate Preston, Muzaffer Uysal, Anthony Watson

**Absent:** Brad Klein (with notice), David Shuster (with notice), Jill Sible (with notice)

**Guests:** Kevin Ayoub, Travis Cross, Captain Houston, Margie Murray, April Myers, Pam Vickers, Laura Wedin, Eric Wininger

Dr. Taylor called the meeting to order at 12:16 p.m.

**Approval of October 6, 2010, minutes**

O'Rourke moved to approve the minutes of the October 6, 2010, meeting. With a second from Hincker, the minutes were approved unanimously.

**Emergency Procedures Update - Mike Mulhare**

Taylor asked Mike Mulhare to speak to the committee about emergency procedures to use during Commencement ceremonies. Last spring, there were severe thunderstorms in the area and several ushers indicated that they would have liked to have detailed instructions on what to tell guests during inclement weather. Mulhare indicated that he would like to establish a team of lead coordinators for the five major sections of the Commencement ceremonies. Those areas include management of the stage party, processions, guest services, security, and emergency medical services. It will also be helpful to have someone familiar with all aspects of the ceremony to be stationed in the command center to help with the decision making process and allow for changes to be made quickly. Radios will be provided to those in charge of the five areas and will help alleviate any communication issues. A suggestion was made that the chair of the Commencement Committee should be the person stationed in the command center because he or she is familiar with all aspects of the ceremony.

Nottingham questioned if there is a contingency plan in place for the Fall ceremonies. Mulhare indicated that they would be the same as a basketball game. It was suggested that a briefing take place with the ushers prior to the ceremony to go over evacuation procedures.

Murray indicated that guests for ceremonies in Cassell Coliseum are not allowed to have umbrellas. There should not be a visibility issue in the coliseum because of umbrellas. There could be a place at the door where guests could leave their umbrellas, but this area would not be monitored. Hincker indicated that Commencement guests in the stadium do not usually dress for the weather and should be allowed to have umbrellas as well. Mulhare and the Virginia Tech Police Department will revisit the ban on umbrellas and will report back to the committee.

A question was raised as to if there is an established time when a decision is made to cancel or postpone a ceremony. Mulhare indicated that it is difficult to give an exact time for every ceremony because each storm system is different. The snow storm from last fall was very unusual because the snow accumulation was faster than predicted, and it was too late to cancel

the graduate ceremony when that was determined. Hincker indicated that there really needs to be at least a three-hour span of time to inform everybody of cancellations or postponements. Cross questioned if there is a Commencement presence on Facebook. Hincker explained that there is a Virginia Tech Facebook page but not a specific page for Commencement. Murray indicated that the Fall Commencement brochure has a more detailed list of where information about inclement weather can be found, and the brochure is also on the Commencement website.

Taylor will work on getting a small group together to be the lead coordinators for the Commencement ceremonies. This group will begin meeting with Mike Mulhare to establish the appropriate organizational chart for each section along with procedures for communicating and implementing cancellations and postponements.

### **Planning for Fall Ceremonies**

Taylor informed the committee that the marshal/usher volunteer recruitment e-mail went out today. Nottingham asked the college representatives to let her know if anything was omitted from the e-mail and she will make the necessary changes. Broyles indicated that he would send out a copy of the job description for each of the positions that would include the time commitment required. It was determined that it is okay to have graduate students participate as marshals and ushers.

Cross indicated that the singers are lined up and the musicians are being finalized. Taylor informed the committee that in years past, there have been issues with the stand lights disappearing and there needs to be better coordination in order to make sure the lights are accounted for.

O'Rourke informed the committee that there is limited sound on the stage in Cassell Coliseum. This will need to be corrected prior to the Fall ceremonies.

### **Announcements/Other Items**

- The rehearsal will be on Thursday, December 16, 2010, at 4:00 p.m. in Cassell Coliseum.
- All student speakers have been selected. A meeting is scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on December 9, 2010, with the student speakers, Dan Taylor, and Kim O'Rourke to discuss speech length and content.
- An issue was raised about graduates' names being listed in the Commencement program when they graduate versus when they walk. This item of business will be brought back to the committee at the December 1 meeting after more information is gathered.
- There will be a subcommittee meeting on November 10, 2010, to discuss a new location to line up graduates in Cassell Coliseum beginning in the spring.
- There were no updates on the Burruss Hall and Cassell Coliseum space issues.
- The issue with the Commencement chairs is still being addressed, and will be reported on at a later date.

With no other business, Long moved to adjourn at 12:47 p.m.