

**University Commencement Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, February 4, 2015**  
**12:15 p.m.**  
**President's Board Room, 210 Burruss Hall**

**Present:** Dan Taylor (chair), Janice Austin, Jan Helge Bøhn, Candi Clemenz, Chelsea Corkins, Carrie Cox, Andrew Ellis, Jean-Luc Ford, Gina French, Rebecca Funk, B.J. Norris for Larry Hincker, Kim O'Rourke, Martha Sullivan, Anthony Watson, Pengtao Yue, Diane Zahm

**Absent** Luke Carroll, Joe Merola, Joseph Millett, Jacqueline Nottingham (with notice), Elena Serrano

**Guests:** Bo Frazier, Sergeant Tom Gallemore, Cheryl Peterson, Andrew Putnam, Margie Murray, April Myers, Pam Vickers, Laura Wedin

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

**Approval of December 3, 2014, minutes**

A motion to approve the minutes of the December 3, 2014, meeting. The motion was seconded, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

**Recap of Fall ceremonies**

There were no issues or concerns that needed to be addressed for the fall ceremonies.

**Planning for Spring ceremonies**

Murray indicated that the schedule for the spring ceremonies and events will be posted by mid-February on the Commencement website. Extra time has been added to the Saturday ceremonies in Cassell Coliseum because the numbers of graduates for these ceremonies are increasing. Traditionally, there has only been an hour between the ceremonies which is not enough time for graduates and guests from a ceremony to exit the building before graduates and guests of the next ceremony begin arriving. It is important for each college or department to let their students know to show up no earlier than an hour before their ceremony because the event staff will not let them enter early. Murray then indicated a request has been made to add two more small ceremonies to the Friday schedule. All colleges and departments that have ceremonies on Friday have been informed that they are required to have office hours posted for Saturday for the distribution of diplomas since the diplomas will not be available in time for the Friday ceremonies.

Murray stated that Engineering has indicated that there is a possibility that the college may break off in to smaller ceremonies. Currently there are approximately 33 ceremonies, and if Engineering breaks off into smaller ceremonies, there could be an additional 4 or 5 more ceremonies added to the spring schedule next year.

Zahm indicated that there was an issue with the usher orientation at the coliseum last year because the ushers were not able to get into the coliseum before the doors were opened. Sergeant Gallemore stated that could be resolved by setting a central entrance for the ushers. The RMC event staff will be made aware that ushers should be allowed to enter the coliseum for orientation.

Frazier reminded the committee about the traffic issues last spring. The University ceremony begins at 9:00 a.m. Guests begin arriving for the University ceremony at the same time employees are coming to work creating major traffic issues. A suggestion was made to either

change the start time of the ceremony to a later time or delay opening the university. O'Rourke indicated that opening the university at 10:00 a.m. would help to alleviate some of the traffic issues because employees would not be trying to get to work at the same time Commencement guests begin arriving. She will raise the issue with the President and Provost.

Spring Road will be closed during Commencement. Closing Spring Road provides a much better pathway for pedestrians.

Taylor indicated that President Sands suggested adding a statement to the Commencement script about moving the tassel once degrees are conferred. Wedin then suggested that the statement should also include wording about turning the class ring. Upon graduation, students turn their class ring to face out to show they are a graduate of Virginia Tech.

Corkins informed the committee that some graduate students have questioned whether translations for other language and sign language are done for the ceremonies. Vickers indicated that sign language interpreters are provided for the University and Graduate School ceremonies. Taylor stated that currently there are no translations for other languages. Having the ceremony translated would not be an easy task, and it would be costly. Murray suggested translating the video of the University and Graduate School ceremonies after-the-fact. Taylor asked Corkins to do some research on what other colleges and universities do and to report the findings back to the committee.

A comment was made about how good the international flag display looked at last spring's ceremony. Bøhn asked if we have flags for every state. Taylor indicated that the United States flag was used to represent the country.

Wedin indicated that there is a new initiative through the Alumni Association called "100 days till graduation," which starts on February 5, 2015. The Alumni Association has partnered with the bookstore, athletics, career services, and other areas to provide seniors with special programs. The website is <http://www.alumni.vt.edu/100days/>. There will be Commencement information added to this site. Myers suggested adding a link on the Commencement website to the 100 days site.

Putnam indicated that the Commencement band tour proposal will be finalized soon and will be presented at the next Commencement Committee meeting. Taylor indicated that the next meeting may be cancelled, but an electronic vote can be taken for the band tour proposal.

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