

MINUTES

Commencement Committee

December 4, 2024

12:00 p.m.

Zoom

Present: Diane Zahm (presiding), Anthony Watson, Clayton Oliver, Eryn Giegel, Jeanette Biczal, Jenn Thomas, Jennifer Cleveland, Jodie Brinkmann, Keith Thompson, Marlena Lester, Michelle Seref, Monica Kimbrell, Rachel Miles, Stewart Scales, Vito Scarola

Absent with Notice: Janice Austin

Absent: Princess Merritt, Pascha Gerni, Lance Jones, Kayla Moten, Kim O'Rourke, Michael Stowe, Monecia Taylor, James Weger, Dixie Dalton, Michael Mulhare, Derek Shapiro, Casey Underwood, Nikeshia Arthur, Annie McCallum, Andrew Marinik, Abby Carlson,

Guests: Ciji Good, John Torget, Jessie Richards, Barbara Hoopes, Brittany Schulz, Erin Hand, Cara Walters, Ginny Wagg, John Jackson, Milford Palmer, Rebecca Jones,

Diane Zahm called the meeting to order at 12:02 p.m.

1. Introduction of Members

Full introductions of all attending members were not conducted during this meeting. The floor was opened for new attendees to make introductions of themselves. One new member, Clayton Oliver, introduced himself as attending in place of Andrew Marinik, representing Emergency Management.

2. Fall Commencement Timeline Review

Jessie Richards provided a complete review of the timeline for Fall Commencement. The only significant change from the previous year is that, at 9:00 a.m., doors will open to both the public and students and will remain open until the conclusion of the last ceremony. Previously, doors were staggered to open at different times for students and the public. This change was made to accommodate students arriving with friends and family.

It was brought to the group's attention that anyone who would like to attend or observe is welcome to join the rehearsal on Thursday, the 19th, at 4:00 p.m. in Cassell Coliseum. Diane Zahm clarified that there is no official rehearsal for the actual ceremony; rather, it is an opportunity to familiarize participants with the venue and test equipment, such as microphones.

The floor was opened to questions. Diane Zahm inquired if faculty who would like to participate but are not volunteers can join the ceremony, what time they should arrive, whether they should be in regalia, and where special seating will be located. Jessie Richards responded that faculty should arrive between 9:30 and 10:00 a.m. Seating will be provided for them at the front on the floor, but they will not participate in the procession. They should be in regalia.

Diane Zahm inquired if a weather meeting would be scheduled to prepare for potential inclement weather. Clayton Oliver, Emergency Management representative, responded that it is still early, but by approximately the 16th or 17th, they should have a better idea of the weather forecast. He assured

the group that Emergency Management is available to provide support as needed. Jessie Richards added that while no meeting has been scheduled yet, Andrew Marinik (Emergency Management) has been contacted through the implementation meetings, and a weather meeting will be arranged for the week of the event, if necessary.

Michelle Seref asked if there is a printed script for the stage party. Jessie Richards confirmed that a script will be available on the lectern. Michelle also inquired if the colleges need a name reader for the graduate ceremonies. Diane Zahm responded that Joe Merola will be the name reader for the graduate ceremonies and suggested that each stage party member print their portion of the script in advance. Additionally, Michelle asked if master's graduates are part of the university or graduate ceremony. Ciji Good clarified that, in the fall, they are part of the graduate ceremony.

Monica Kimbrell asked if the deans will receive information or if they need to check in. Jessie Richards responded that information and instructions will be sent out soon, further clarifying that Special Events will send stage party instructions, name reader instructions, and marshal instructions to the appropriate parties.

Marlena Lester asked if associate deans are the readers of names for the undergraduate ceremony and if Joe Merola will read for the graduate ceremony. Diane Zahm confirmed that this is correct.

Additional questions were invited, but no further questions were raised regarding commencement or the timeline.

3. Commencement Speakers Update

Attendees were reminded that the University Keynote Address will be delivered by Margie Lee, Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Studies, Interim Director of the Animal Cancer Care and Research Center, and Department Head. The University Student Speaker will be TJ Brooks, Male Member-at-Large for the Class of 2025. The Graduate Ceremony does not have a keynote speaker, but it will feature student speakers. This year, the student speakers are Elle Smith and Juselyn Tupik.

4. Volunteer Review

Call of Marshals – Call of Marshals deadline has passed but there are still many unfilled spots. Diane Zahm stated that recruiting marshals has been more challenging than anticipated. She shared the information she had sent regarding the need for volunteers with regalia to lead graduates to the stage, with or without regalia to assist in seating graduates, and without regalia to assist with ADA services. Diane noted that, particularly on the graduate side, there are too many volunteers signing up to be in regalia, but at least one volunteer without regalia is needed from each group. She thanked those who have been helping to find volunteers and asked for further assistance in filling out the necessary roles for each ceremony. Diane added a link to the chat so that anyone can edit the volunteer list.

We are currently well below the required number of volunteers for the ceremonies. Diane stated she would be sending out reminders to those who have not yet submitted volunteer names after the meeting.

ADA Needs – Diane Zahm stated that efforts are underway to compile a comprehensive list of ADA needs for participants, especially to ensure the stage is set up correctly. Jenn Thomas then asked if ADA volunteers are required for the entire ceremony or just at the start. Diane responded that they

are needed throughout the ceremony, as volunteers may be needed to escort individuals both in and out.

9. Adjournment

There being no further business or questions, Diane Zahm adjourned the meeting at 12:23 p.m.