

MINUTES

Commencement Committee Meeting Wednesday, February 11, 2026 Noon – 1 p.m. Zoom

Present – Diane Zahm (presiding), Amy Rasor, Anthony Watson, Cathy Barker, Dixie Dalton, Janice Austin, Jeanette Biczal, Monica Kimbrell, Stephanie Hart, Jennifer Cleveland, Keith Thompson, Pascha Gerni, Rebecca Weaver-Hightower, Nahum Arav, Kim O'Rourke

Absent with Notice: Vito Scarola, Stewart Scales, Monecia Taylor

Absent: Manuka Bhatiani, Lance Jones, Justin Lemkul, Kayla Moten, Karl Rice, Michelle Seref, Michael Stowe, Jenn Thomas, James Weger

Guests: John Torget, Jessie Richards, Jennifer Skaggs, Erin Hand, Annie McCallum, Brittany Lee, Brittany Schulz, Cara Walters, Clayton Oliver, Eryn Giegel, Ginny Wagg, Haylee Simpkins, Holly Wessel, Joe Cooley, John Jackson, Katie Smith

Diane Zahm called the meeting to order at 12:01 p.m. A quorum was present.

1. Announcement of approval and posting of minutes of 12/3/25

Diane Zahm noted that the minutes from the Committee's previous meeting on 12/3/25 were approved electronically and can be publicly accessed on the Governance Website: governance.vt.edu

2. Introduction of New Members

There were no new members present. Invited guest Joseph Cooley, ADA Campus Accessibility Architect, introduced Katie Smith, ADA Accommodation Specialist, who will be attending meetings regularly.

3. Fall Commencement Debrief

Diane Zahm opened the floor for discussion of Fall Commencement. It was noted that the events went "exceedingly well." Joseph Cooley said from an ADA standpoint the volunteers from each college were particularly great this year. Diane Zahm noted that, despite changes in routing and entrances this year, everything went very smoothly.

4. Spring Commencement Ceremonies

The schedule for spring commencement ceremonies was briefly discussed with Jessie Richards mentioning that the only major changes are that College of Science will now hold their ceremonies in Cassell Coliseum rather than Lane Stadium and the Corps of Cadets will now hold their commencement and commissioning ceremonies in Cassell rather than Burruss Hall.

Kim O'Rourke asked if there would be any changes to where the stage party participants for University and Graduate School will meet prior to the start of their ceremonies and it was confirmed that there will be no changes for this spring. She also asked about the elevator situation in Lane Stadium – particularly the North Tower. Anthony Watson stated that there is ongoing work happening on the elevators but they will make sure there is at least one working

elevator at the time of commencement ceremonies. Jessie Richards stated these details would be discussed during Implementation Team meetings and shared with the Committee as we move forward in planning noting that anything that will need to be shared widely will be communicated as early as possible.

5. Special Events Liaison and College Coordinator Kickoff Meeting

Erin Hand spoke to the Committee to let them know that the Office of Special Events would be holding a kickoff meeting for Special Events Coordinators from their office to meet with the college level coordinators prior to the start of individual meetings between SE Coordinators with the coordinators from their assigned colleges. A poll will be sent to all of the college representatives on the Committee as well as the college level coordinators in order to choose the date and time. Special Events is requesting that at least one representative from each college be present.

6. Spring Volunteer Timeline

Diane Zahm let the Committee know that the call for volunteers from each college will come from her office in about a month and volunteer information will be due on or about May 1, 2026. The request for the University ceremony will be one person from each college to work as an ADA assistant and two people to help with seating students on the field; for the Graduate School ceremony the request will be only for one person from each college to work as an ADA assistant as the Graduate School will use faculty for assistance in seating students on the floor at Cassell.

Katie Smith enquired about what the ADA needs typically are for the student seating area at Lane Stadium. Clarification was made that ADA assistants will be in the concourse to assist with guests who may need additional help due to mobility issues, but that we do not keep ADA assistants on the field. Should we be alerted to a student requiring additional help that would be communicated prior to the ceremonies.

7. Commencement Speaker

Diane Zahm announced that historically, in the year following a gubernatorial election, the University Spring Commencement will have the newly-elected governor as the keynote speaker. This has yet to be officially confirmed and will be revisited with the Committee once confirmation is received.

8. Further Business

There was no further business brought forward in the meeting.

9. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting as adjourned at 12:15 p.m.