

University Commencement Committee Meeting Minutes

February 2, 2022

12:00PM

Zoom

Attending: Diane Zahm (chair), Janice Austin, Eric Kaufman, Danielle Panico, Paul Deck, Kim O'Rourke, Jennifer Cleveland, Margaret Deck, Stewart Scales, Danesh Tafti, Sydney Kinstler, Anthony Watson, Melissa Wright, Monecia Taylor

Invited Guests: Laura Wedin, Tom Gallemore, Pamela Vickers, Kelly McCann, Deanna Harman, Alex Garner, Joseph Cooley

Diane Zahm called the meeting to order at 12:03 pm.

Fall Commencement Debrief

Overall commencement feedback was positive. Not having a procession received positive feedback. Will look at continuing this in the future. Estimates on seating worked well, only a few stragglers in the back and overflow seating was not needed.

May need more ADA volunteers. Needed more SSD down on the floor for the students. Need to be more prepared for ADA students and their needs. A meeting is planned to discuss future ADA staffing needs.

There was a discussion about the placement of the third student speaker, so that the student's Closing Reflections take place after the President's final remarks. Because the last student speaker speaks after the President's closing comments, the final student speaker's remarks should be kept very short as the audience is eager to leave and not expecting another long speech or have the President's final remarks follow the last student speaker.

Spring Commencement Music

Current commencement layout will have the musicians seated on the field during the ceremony. In the past musicians have been seated on the stage and stands.

A recommendation has been made to use prerecorded music for all commencement ceremonies this spring. Current weather plans for University and Graduate School commencements have the events as go or no go. Video recording of the musicians would allow the ensemble to still be used if virtual program is necessary, and would prevent any rain damage to the instruments.

A new recording could be made each year. Prerecorded music may be the best route for this year, but live music at commencement ceremonies should be revisited in the future. Several members expressed a preference for returning to live music when the pandemic subsides.

The decision was made to video record the musicians for this spring commencement, and to review again for next year. The video recording of pomp and circumstance will be available for the college ceremonies. Kelly will contact Derek Shapiro to discuss next steps.

College Ceremonies for spring

Colleges are responsible for their own ceremony, programming, and any prerecorded items. The university will provide the video/production element of the pomp and circumstance music. If a recorded greeting from President Sands is created, it will also be available for the college ceremonies to use.

Ceremonies need to be as close as possible to 2 hours in length. It is best to cut back on programming to maintain the 2 hour time limit. Each college will be asked to provide a prepared weather script.

Information is being put together now to send to colleges to help with logistics. A meeting will be scheduled with all colleges to go over details about schedule, logistics, and responsibilities. Colleges will be responsible for volunteers at their own ceremonies. Rhino, PD, emergency management, facilities, and parking will be coordinated for the colleges. Guidance was requested from colleges on what their staffing and volunteer needs would be.

As of now, there will be no cost to colleges for using production services and jumbotron. Each event will be lived streamed and have closed captioning.

A podium floral arrangement will be at all ceremonies. The US Flag and VT Flag will be stationed near the stage for all college ceremonies.

The stage will be set for 35-40 people for each ceremony. Removing the band from the stage allowed additional seating on stage.

Guests with disabilities/needs should be directed to ADA office. Currently working through ADA issues in real time. Once a plan is created it will be shared with everyone. Will need to communicate that personal assistance equipment, such as wheelchairs, is not available on site and guests should bring their own or rent. The ADA website does have a list of rental locations in area; however, it should be suggested to guests that they try renting from home and bring with them. Any student with needs should report them to SSD.

University and Graduate Ceremonies

The Northern Virginia graduation is usually held at George Mason. This is an indoor venue. Will need to check if there are any VT restrictions on indoor use due to COVID.

If having procession for university commencement it will require Lot 4 to line up students. There was no feedback from students from regarding not having processional at fall commencement. The committee is recommending not having a student procession for the spring commencement.

Marshals are still needed for graduate and university ceremonies. Additionally, volunteers will still be required at the ceremonies.

Lane Stadium field seating will have five to six thousand seats. All seats will be out for all ceremonies. It will be from goal to goal post. There will be a center aisle.

Adjournment

With no further committee business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:39 p.m.

Future Meeting Date

Wednesday, March 2nd, 2022 at Noon