

University Commencement Committee Meeting Minutes

October 6, 2021

12:00PM

Zoom

Attending: Diane Zahm (chair), Janice Austin, Eric Kaufman, Danielle Panico, Paul Deck, Amie Pendleton, Prince Wang, Anthony Watson, Melissa Wright, Kim O'Rourke

Invited Guests: John Jackson, Rick Sparks, Pamela Vickers, Alex Garner, Ciji Good, Clara Elpi, Laura Wedin, Tracy Vosburgh, Paula Vickers, Susan Gill, Deanna Harman

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

Introduction of New Members

All in attendance introduced themselves and their roles on the committee.

Fall Commencement – Friday, December 17

The undergraduate ceremony will be Friday, December 17th at 10:30a.m. The graduate ceremony will be Friday, December 17th at 2:30p.m. The doctoral hooding is expected to occur. Both ceremonies will resemble the in-person ceremonies of the past. There currently is no limits on the number of guests, this is subject to change. The colosseum is currently having an air ventilation system study conducted. The results will determine if limitation on the number of guests will be required. Both ceremonies will be live streamed and this will help if required to add limitation on number of guests.

The 10:30 and 2:30 ceremony times do not include the one to two hours early arrival time for those assisting with the ceremonies. Both ceremonies will have students take the first available seat rather than procession like past to avoid the large group waiting together before ceremony. Processional would be just faculty and stage.

Ceremonies will follow COVID procedures. Currently mask are required for all indoor events. Additional procedures may be put into place. Committee and students will be notified of any changes to COVID procedures.

Spring 2022 and beyond

Changes to the Spring 2022 commencement have been proposed. The university wide ceremonies have been fitting but the colosseum has been having problems accommodating all the separate college ceremonies. Tentative plans would have college ceremonies in the stadium and not have any other school/department ceremonies in the spring and beyond. Received a lot of positive feedback from students, deans, and families from using the stadium last year. This may affect how this committee works in the future. The university ceremonies for undergraduate and graduate would also be at the stadium. Commissioning would continue to

be held at Bursars and the Med and Vet school location would not change. This change would resemble the ceremonies the colleges had in the stadium during COVID. Moving forward this will allow for the students input to have an experience in the stadium and have their name read as they walk across the stage. Still in conversations with President and Provost Offices. White paper also included not handing out diplomas at the ceremonies and they would be mailed following the ceremony. In order to give diplomas at ceremony it required faculty to calculate an estimate grade earlier for graduating students. This removes issues with no-show students and needing estimate grades.

The ceremonies would occur rain or shine. In the case of inclement weather, plans will have built in slide time, or possibly a third time slot open for issues. The schedule is still being worked on.

It is the departments/ schools discretion to offer recognition ceremony or reception instead of a graduation ceremony. Departments would no longer hand out diplomas. This would be planned by the department and no longer through the Office of Special Events. This is an attempt to reduce the total number of ceremonies in which time conflicts could occur or require families/guests to wait days between ceremonies. The plan will allow for a commencement weekend.

Logistics for the plan are still in the works, including lodging on campus for spring ceremonies. There will be conversations about the Inn requiring a three night minimum and the housing on campus.

Facilities will have limitations on chair set up, take down, or rearrange seating for ceremonies in spring. Current plan is to have the maximum number of chairs and remove/move as needed for smaller ceremonies.

Additionally, the Office of Special Events will be helping to plan the ceremonies. The Office of Special Events would be there consistently throughout the ceremonies and assist with events, but will still ask colleges for some help.

Timelines/Deadlines

Diane Zahm will be sending out a call for volunteers around November 1st to college representatives. Volunteers are needed for Ushers and Marshall. This will include who arranges the volunteers (i.e. colleges of Business and Engineering work through the Dean's office) and a spreadsheet of number/needs for graduate and undergraduate ceremonies. Information is needed back on December 1st. Needs may be adjusted based on COVID procedures/ changes.

Commencement speaker will be identified by student committee members and submitted to Laura Wedin. Fall ceremony process would require students to provide to President with three names and the President will decide who speaks. Typically speaker nominations are submitted by the October meeting. In the spring with the new governor elected a request will be send for the governor to speak. Invitation will need to be send out from President Office as soon as governor is elected.

Production/Ceremony Needs

Lapel pins will be given and will most likely be the VT pins. For spring commencement there will be special tassels for sesqui year. Sesqui logo will also be on the spring diplomas.

Technical committee will be meeting to discuss what is needed for the virtual components of the ceremony. A full virtual ceremony will not be conducted like last year but certain aspects will be included this year. Decisions will be needed soon on what to include. Discuss crowd sourcing videos for beginning. The Hokie Bird reveal may be included but will need to be revised from last year's ceremony.

A call for families/users to submit items for virtual components will need to be sent out. A news release for the times of the fall ceremonies will be sent. This may wait till after air study is completed so can reflect any changes.

Adjournment

With no further committee business, the meeting adjourned at 12:48 p.m.

Future Meeting Dates-

November 3rd at Noon.