

**University Commencement Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, October 3, 2018**  
**12:15 p.m.**  
**Holtzman Alumni Center Boardroom**

**Present:** Diane Zahm (chair), Nicole Akers, Janice Austin, Grant Bommer sat in for Greg Klatt, Jamie Cowell-Lucero, Lance Jones, Billy Lin, Kim O'Rourke, Michael Stowe, Anthony Watson, Matthew Winston

**Absent:** Hans Robinson, Wat Hopkins, Tanyel Turkaslan Bulbul, Jay Crone, Deborah Dickerson, Rebecca Funk (with notice), Marcella Kelly, Lara Khansa, Lara Khansa, Marcella Kelly, Greg Klatt Scotland Leman, Cheryl Peterson (with notice), Cara Spicer, Wat Hopkins (Director of Ushers)

**Guests:** Tom Gallemore, Ciji Good, Kelly McCann, Darryl McCallum, Margie Murray, Bobbi Myers, Dennis Robarge, Pam Vickers, Laura Wedin

Dr. Zahm called the meeting to order at 12:16 p.m.

**Announcement of the Approval of the May 2, 2018, Minutes**

Zahm announced that the minutes of the May 2, 2018, meeting were approved by the committee electronically.

**Introduction of New Members**

Zahm begin the meeting by asking for everyone to introduce themselves and state what their duties were with regard to the committee. After the introductions were made, it was related that the Office of Alumni Relations would be taking over the operations of Commencement planning, along with the assistance of Special Events and University Relations.

**Spring Commencement Debrief**

Zahm said that the main requests from families are more maps and directions, especially for where their graduate is seated, and on what row. And the loss of personal wheelchairs is a problem. Guests who are able to move from a wheelchair into a seat must leave the wheelchair in the concourse. Other families leaving the ceremonies are not aware this is a personal wheelchair, and they have been taken to assist another guest. The wheelchairs are sometimes returned, but generally end up in the parking lots. We need to find a way to keep wheelchairs from being taken. Some suggestions included assigning ushers to monitor the chairs, creating a wheelchair check system, or using signs similar to those in amusement parks. Having a wheelchair check handled by Rhino Event Services would be an additional cost.

There was a delay in getting the stage party to the field for the procession. In the future, the stage party needs to begin moving down to the tunnel when the processional begins. The elevator was not working as well as it should have been. Because Lot 4 was used for the first time, the management of the candidates went smoother than in past years. The barricades worked very well and will continue to be used.

Gallemore indicated that the Shott Media Room would be lost due to the ACC Network construction. At this point, it is unclear if the hallway by that room will be available for stage party lineup. If not, that will happen in another area of the tunnel.

Traffic after the ceremony was worse than normal because everyone tried to depart the same way they entered Lot 2.

**Preparations for Fall Commencement**

Zahm asked Winston to discuss his new role with the committee. Winston mentioned one goal was to hold fewer meetings for the full committee by having two committees: one that is operational, and one that focuses on theme-setting and tone-setting, and working toward getting faculty motivated to participate. Winston also hoped to have members of the committee recommend names to the president to be considered as speakers at

spring graduation. Students already nominate faculty to speak during the fall ceremony. The president will still make the final decision. More of these goals will come to fruition as plans for the Spring 2019 Commencement ceremonies begin.

Zahm indicated that each college treats the participation of faculty in a different matter. A message is needed from the president indicating the strong expectation of faculty participation. Zahm said that at other colleges she had worked, there was a clear expectation, but she hasn't seen that at Virginia Tech. She thinks Commencement is an important part of faculty life.

A timeline for spring commencement was prepared, and a similar timeline should be prepared for all commencement so everyone has the same schedule.

Special Events is working on standard operating procedures, and in addition to each ceremony timeline, a yearlong schedule of the planning process will be prepared. You may be contacted to meet so the Special Events Office can determine your portion of the operational process.

As of fall 2018, all guests need to understand that the clear bag policy is mandatory in Lane Stadium and Cassell Coliseum. Perhaps as a reminder, signs could be posted in the parking lots indicating the clear bag policy, rather than finding out at the gate. Again, more signs is an additional expense. Working staff could have gallon bags available in case they are needed.

Laura Wedin mentioned that Commencement ceremonies should be a wonderful experience, and future planning should focus on that. Good mentioned that the VT pin handout at the end of the University ceremony was well-received, and worked well from the standpoint of the staff that were involved.

A brief discussion followed with regard to honor cords and stoles. There is no university policy that relates to how many accoutrements a student may wear, or what colors cords may be. Stoles instead of cords are suggested, and that is becoming more prominent among students. Winston noted that with regard to the regalia, a student may wear a gown with or without the new logo. Regalia is required to participate, and should be black.

It was requested that the nominees from students for fall University Commencement speakers be sent to the President as soon as possible.

**Future Meeting Dates – Holtzman Alumni Center Boardroom – 12:15 p.m.**

December 5, 2018

February 6, 2019

April 3, 2019

May 1, 2019

**Adjournment**

With no further committee business, the meeting adjourned at 1:03 p.m.