

University Commencement Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, November 6, 2019

12:15 p.m.

Holtzman Alumni Center Boardroom

Attending: Diane Zahm (Chair), Janice Austin (Grad), Jay Crone (CLAHS), Cara Spicer (Pamplin), Gregory Klatt (Class of 2020), Lance Jones (VTCC), Anthony Watson (Facilities), Kelly McCann (SE), Kim O'Rourke (VPPG), Jamie Cowell-Lucero (CALs), Monecia Taylor (PG)

Invited Guests: Tara Nepper (SE), Cjana Camp (Rhino), Dennis Robarge (Rhino), Derek Shapiro (Band)

Guests: Margie Murray (Lisa Wilkes), Laura Wedin (Alumni),

Diane Zahm Called to order at 12:15 p.m.

Minutes

Dr. Zahm reminded members the minutes were sent prior to the meeting for review.

Kim O'Rourke requested clarification on why faculty participation would increase if the university does not hand out diplomas at spring commencement. Dr. Zahm noted that there are time constraints for turning in grades which prevent faculty members from fully participating in ceremonies.

Kim O'Rourke made a motion for the approval of the minutes, Cara Spicer seconded and the minutes were approved.

General Business

Dr. Zahm reported that an email has been distributed asking for colleges to provide usher support. If members have not seen the email, please email Wat Hopkins (whopkins@vt.edu). Additional Rhino staff will be needed to address ADA areas. Ushers are asked to arrive by 8:45 a.m. in order to receive instructions and be in place by 9 a.m. when the doors open. There may be mixed messages circulating each year that ushers do not need to be in place until the doors open. This message needs to be discontinued in order for ushers to receive new information and to allow for everyone to be in place when the doors open. Corps members are also asked to arrive early.

Dr. Zahm asked if hooding faculty need to be reminded about regalia. Janice Austin stated that she is in contact with grad school faculty and she also makes sure to have additional regalia on hand in case it is needed.

Greg Klatt reported that student speakers have been selected as well as potential fall commencement keynote speaker choices. The choices for the keynote speaker have been submitted to the President's Office for approval and to extend a formal invitation.

Cathy Grimes with the Graduate School will handle correspondence with graduate ceremony speakers.

A weather plan is being developed in order to plan for any weather issues both during the week and the day of the ceremony. Weather issues earlier in the week has the potential to extend final exams,

potentially into Friday. A tabletop exercise with senior leadership as well as EMS, VTPD and others including University Relations will present various scenarios and that group will work to create the appropriate messaging for any disruptions to the existing plans.

For communication purposes, the ceremonies begin at 10:30 and 2:30. These are the times when students begin processing. In the past different procession times have been published which can be confusing. Relaying information in this way is concise and allows for little or no confusion regarding the starting times.

Lunch for the stage party will be provided in the President's Box in Lane Stadium between the University and Graduate Ceremonies. Information will be relayed to the stage party in a memo to be sent out soon. This change in location is due to the Bowman Room being offline due to renovations.

For ADA accessibility in Cassell, students can take the elevator to the first floor but access from the third floor is restricted. Guests needing ADA accessibility should enter Cassell through the front doors in order to get to wheelchair accessible areas. Kelly McCann has sent wording to ADA, SSD, VTPD, and parking for approval. Drivers will be able to drop off guests in front of Hahn Hurst and park in lot 1. There will be existing basketball signage which should provide assistance. There is a ramp at the east doors so that side can be open as it normally is not. Staffing will also be needed in that area.

A new clear bag policy and restricted items list is being adopted for commencement in order to align with the university policy. Instead of linking to athletics clear bag policy which has a different list of restricted and allowed items, a new policy has been created for commencement. This policy will apply to all venues even though we are aware that not all facilities have a process to check bags. This new list of clear bag and restricted items list allows for a blanket statement about what is or is not allowed without having to develop a separate policy for each building according to university policies and procedures.

A meeting was held with University Relations and an email will be sent to students with Five Things to Know before the fall ceremony. Laura Wedin provided input that she also has a listserv consisting of students graduating fall 2019. Further discussion will be held in order to make sure that emails relating to commencement go through the BBIS system and that all messaging is consistent. Additional opportunities for communicating are through the bookstore for students picking up regalia and at the Grad Fair on February 5th, Canvas, VDOT signs and to local hotels. Any information colleges send out to graduates should be shared with Special Events so that we can make sure a consistent message is shared as the phone number for the office is what is published online for questions.

The Commencement Guide is being redeveloped for fall. Updates are being added and the new guide will have the weather plan, clear bag policy and other information important to students and parents.

Janice will send graduate information for the website in the same format as last year, which is a pdf booklet.

The final spring college ceremony schedules has been posted to the website.

Derek Shapiro asked about the payment process for musicians. Kelly will discuss outside of the meeting regarding the process for submitting a proposal for committee approval.

The December meeting will be important in nailing down final details and all members are encouraged to attend.

Adjournment

With no further committee business, the meeting adjourned at 12:35 p.m.

Next Meeting Date

December 6, 2019

Holtzman Alumni Center Boardroom

12:15 p.m.