

## UNIVERSITY COMMENCEMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES

September 5, 2001

210 Burruss Hall

12:15 – 1:30 p.m.

(Revised)

**PRESENT:** E. Henneke, K. O'Rourke, L. Hincker, Lt. Colonel Stringer for J. Allen, D. Taylor, Pat Goodrich, J. Beach for Bill Elvey, Mitzi Vernon, W. Green, R. Billingsley, S. Schofield-Tomschin, B. Klein, M.A. Lewis for Janet Johnson, and G. Hill.

**GUESTS:** M. Murray, Lyndell Price

**ABSENT:** B. Conger, D. Reaves, S. Burke, E. Brown, H. Robertshaw, A. Zink-Sharp, R. Crawford, E. Miller.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Henneke at 12:15 p.m.

### **Approval of May 2, 2001 Minutes**

Moved by D. Taylor, seconded by K. O'Rourke, the minutes were approved unanimously as distributed.

### **Introductions**

Kim O'Rourke took a moment to introduce Margie Murray, Special Events Coordinator in the President's Office. She is replacing Carolyn Agnew as primary support for the Commencement Committee. Carolyn recently retired after serving several years as assistant to the Commencement Committee.

Chairman Henneke asked that the committee officially acknowledge Carolyn's long hours and commitment to the committee and express its appreciation.

### **Post Mortem of Spring Commencement 2001**

Handicap and wheelchair mobility seemed to be the biggest problem. In addition to minimal shuttle service and close accessibility, there were too many guests wishing to sit in the wheelchair access area. D. Taylor suggested that more rows in this area be added for family and friends.

Beach said it will be tough to get buses in until the Lane Stadium construction project is well along. He indicated that no bus will be brought in or allowed under the East stands by Cassell Coliseum (north end). There are too many pedestrians in that area.

Taylor indicated there would be no procession in the Spring 2002 ceremony.

Beach indicated there would be no south end zone access, and that the sound truck would no longer be allowed to park on the field due to the new system in place, and that sound towers may not be staked.

Hincker indicated that the stadium P.A. system has been renovated and wondered if we might use our own system. It was determined that the sound system is better than it was, but not quite good enough.

Henneke asked Goodrich about the Graduate Ceremony and having the concession stands opened during the ceremony, especially for beverages at a non-football price. Goodrich indicated that the issue had come up previously and had been voted against because the concessions would not offer a non-football price. Goodrich said she would ask the caterers to serve drinks earlier.

It was mentioned that the Graduate and Corps ceremonies are planned too close together. Arrangements need to be made to hold the Coliseum parking lots better because there is no parking available at the last minute for the stage party.

O'Rourke indicated that the use of the big screen for Spring worked well and that is was a good plan. Hincker said he received a bill from Athletics for \$250 from Athletics for this arrangement, and that there were 5 individuals with cameras—three in the control tower.

Henneke mentioned that a letter of congratulations was sent to the committee from the president expressing his appreciation for their service. It was brought to the attention of the committee that one of the ushers especially commented on how well Physical Plant served the committee.

The next discussion revolved around emergency evacuation plans, especially for infirm or handicapped individuals. Beach indicated that evacuation from the floor of Cassell Coliseum is not easy. The gallery openings are on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor and that the practice gym is used for lining up. There are two ways out, but the fire code limits that access. The University Fire Safety Officer sets the capacity. A sub-committee will be established to look further into these issues.

Tom Tillar of the Alumni Association had planned to be at this meeting to discuss a proposal from the AA to have special academic apparel designed for Virginia Tech. He will attend the October meeting.

It was remarked that the graduate students voted against special VT academic gowns when surveyed previously. Special academic regalia is costly, and may not be used again except in a university setting. Should we have Oak Hall design special gowns? At one time, the McComas regalia was mentioned, but Tillar has another idea. Tillar will discuss this with the committee in October.

Hincker indicated that Pat White's replacement had been chosen and would begin on September 17.

O'Rourke mentioned that a Commencement Hotline or "call box" was in the process of being implemented. This information will be promoted in the upcoming brochure, and O'Rourke asks for the committee's feedback once installed. [Note: The Hotline has since been implemented and can be reached by calling (540) 231-3208, the same as Carolyn Agnew's old phone number.]

The fall ceremonies will be on December 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> this year with the 12<sup>th</sup> being the last day of classes, and the 19<sup>th</sup> the last day of exams.

Henneke received a letter from Dave McKee expressing his thanks to the Committee for supporting his request to Mr. Ridenour for financial support for the commencement orchestra visit to Virginia high schools prior to the Spring Commencement.

With there being no further business, Henneke asked that the meeting adjourn. This was moved by Hincker, seconded by O'Rourke, and the meeting adjourned at 12:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Edmund G. Henneke, Chair  
University Commencement Committee

**Murray, Margie**

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**From:** goodm@vt.edu  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 02, 2001 12:25 PM  
**To:** Murray, Margie  
**Subject:** Re: Meeting of the Commencement Committee - 10/5/2001 - 325 Burruss

I'd like to note two corrections to the minutes from Sept. 15:

*"Henneke asked Goodrich about the Graduate Ceremony and asked her to check into having the concession stands opened during the ceremony, especially for beverages at a non-football price "*

What I said was that the issue had come up previously and had been voted against - because the concessions would not offer a non-football price, and I made a suggestion that I would ask the caterers to serve drinks earlier.

*"Goodrich indicated that the Graduate and Corps ceremonies are planned too close together. Arrangements need to be made to hold the Coliseum parking lots better because there is no parking available at the last minute for the stage party."*

I did not make this comment. The issue came up but I am not sure who brought it up.

Thanks. Pat

At 02:09 PM 10/1/01 -0400, you wrote:

>Agenda for Wednesday and minutes from last meeting are attached. Please let

>me know if you have trouble receiving these documents.

>

>Margie B. Murray

>Special Events Coordinator

>Office of the President

>Phone: (540) 231-7111

>Fax: (540) 231-2337

>email: mbmurray@vt.edu

>

>

>Attachment Converted: "D:\My Documents\Email Attachments\Commencement Committee Agenda 1001.doc"

>

>Attachment Converted: "D:\My Documents\Email Attachments\Rev-Commencement Minutes 92001.doc"

>

Pat Goodrich, Program Support Technician Sr.

Graduate School - Virginia Tech

213 Sandy Hall (Mail Code 0325)

Blacksburg, VA 24061

Tel(540)231-4558 Fax(540)231-3714

goodm@vt.edu

**New Graduate School Web Page: <http://www.grads.vt.edu>**

**UNIVERSITY COMMENCEMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Wednesday, October 3, 2001**  
**325 Burruss Hall**  
**12:15 – 1:30 p.m.**

**PRESENT:** Ed Henneke, Kim O'Rourke, Laura Offstein for J. Allen, Bill Conger, Dixie Reaves, Dan Taylor, Pat Goodrich, John Beach for Bill Elvey, Stan Burke, Bill Green, Bud Brown, Randy Billingsley, Sherry Schofield-Tomschin, Brad Klein, Mary Ann Lewis for Janet Johnson, Reba Crawford, Erin Miller, Michelle Jefferson.

**GUESTS:** Margie Murray, Tom Tillar

**ABSENT:** Larry Hincker, Mitzi Vernon, Harry Robertshaw, Audrey Zink-Sharp, Grant Hill.

Chairman Henneke called the meeting to order at 12:18 p.m.

**Approval of September 5, 2001 Minutes**

Moved by S. Schofield-Tomschin, seconded by K. O'Rourke, the minutes were approved unanimously as distributed.

**Proposal for Special Academic Regalia**

Dr. Tom Tillar, Vice President for Alumni Relations, attended the October 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting to discuss a proposal for the design of special Virginia Tech academic regalia.

Tillar indicated that the first person to ask about specific Virginia Tech regalia was Dr. James McComas. Since there was no special VT regalia, Dr. McComas asked that Tom work with Oak Hall to design regalia for his installment as president. McComas asked that the regalia be designed in Virginia Tech colors.

Because of questions and requests directed to the Alumni Office, Oak Hall and the Bookstore, the Alumni Office began working with Oak Hall over a year ago to come up with a less elaborate design to make available for purchase. Tillar believes that specially designed regalia would be important for alumni remaining in the educational setting.

Tillar brought along a sample robe for presentation. The robe is all black with the VT Shield embroidered in orange on the front and maroon and orange accents on the sleeves. The hood would be velvet with the same orange and maroon and with the coordinating college colors. The tam hat would be maroon velvet. In addition, undergraduates could purchase a sash in two colors. This gown could be purchased at Oak Hall for \$500 to \$600

Tillar asked the committee to endorse this design as an option for those wishing to purchase special academic regalia and to forward this information to all interested groups.

The committee discussed that this matter has come up many times over the years. Surveys of graduates indicated there was no interest. Tillar indicated that these could be purchased at a later date--as are class rings.

Questions from the committee included: 1) Would we own the VT design?, 2) Could we provide it to other companies as well as Oak Hall?, 3) Have we discussed this with licensing and trademark?, 4) Would VT expect a royalty from the sale of the gowns? Tillar indicated that he would look into these issues.

After some discussion, Conger moved that the Commencement Committee endorse the concept. Brown seconded, and all approved that the Commencement Committee would endorse the concept and follow up with a cover letter to the Faculty Senate and the Commission on Faculty Affairs.

## **Planning for Fall Commencement Ceremonies**

### Emergency Evacuation Plans

At the October meeting it was determined that a subcommittee be established to review the emergency evacuation plans for Cassell Coliseum. Bud Brown noticed that at a game he attended in Cassell the exits were closed by chains. The committee needs to ensure that all doors are unlocked.

John Beach suggested that Henneke appoint the subcommittee to formalize the emergency plans. Those appointed were: Ed Henneke, Lyndell Price, John Beach, Bill Conger, Dan Taylor, John Brotherton, Zack Adams, Environmental Health and Safety Services Office, and Dave Badger, Capital Design and Construction Office.

It was stated that the ushers must have training for emergency evacuations. The question also arose as to who would be sending a letter to the Volunteer Rescue Squad to have them on site during the ceremony. The Commencement Committee chair sends the letter, which is drafted by the President's Office. In addition, there should be individuals present with cell phones for communicating emergencies. Kim O'Rourke and Margie Murray will both be on site with cell phones.

### Processional

It was suggested that the committee dispense with using college marshals for master's students and have everyone together. Fewer people would be needed and this could be implemented easily.

### Graduate Ceremony

Goodrich contacted the caterer to ask about serving drinks early during the ceremony. The caterer indicated this would be okay and it shouldn't affect the cost. This will be especially helpful during the May ceremony.

### Commencement Brochure Updates

Attached to the minutes from September was a copy of the current commencement brochure. This brochure is mailed to all undergraduate and graduate candidates' local and permanent addresses. Changes were made based on the comments from the meeting and the committee will receive a copy at the November 7 meeting. These brochures will also be mailed to all faculty and department head secretaries. Henneke made it a point to the committee that the Saturday ceremony be referred to as the University Ceremony and not the Undergraduate Ceremony.

Along with this discussion, it was brought up that there is no easy way to find information on the VT website about Commencement. It was suggested that this information be permanently listed on the VT homepage for easy access. Upon checking with Larry Hincker at a later date, it was determined that Commencement is somewhat different than the headings listed on the homepage, such as *Academics*, *Admissions*, and *Administration*. It was requested that the information for Commencement be included under the sub-heading of **Parents / Family** for easy access in addition to the current site under *Academics*. This request has been approved, and the information will now be posted under these headings and will be included on the recording for the Virginia Tech Commencement Hotline.

Undergraduate Commencement Speaker

O'Rourke mentioned that we would soon have the selection for the Undergraduate Commencement speaker finalized.

Respectfully submitted,

Edmund G. Henneke, Chair  
University Commencement Committee

**UNIVERSITY COMMENCEMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Wednesday, November 7, 2001**  
**12:15 to 1:30 p.m.**  
**President's Boardroom, 210 Burruss Hall**

PRESENT: Ed Henneke, Kim O'Rourke, Larry Hincker, Charles Payne for J. Allen, Bill Conger, Dixie Reaves, Dan Taylor, Pat Goodrich, John Beach for Bill Elvey, Mitzi Vernon, Stan Burke, Bill Green, Randy Billingsley, Harry Robertshaw, Audrey Zink-Sharp, Brad Klein, Mary Ann Lewis for Janet Johnson, Michelle Jefferson.

GUESTS: Margie Murray, Jack Ridinger.

ABSENT: Bud Brown, Sherry Schofield-Tomschin, Reba Crawford, Erin Miller, Grant Hill.

Chairman Henneke called the meeting to order at 12:15 p.m.

**Approval of October 3, 2001, Minutes**

With one addition to the absentee listing, Mary Ann Lewis, Conger moved that the minutes be approved, Vernon seconded, and the minutes were unanimously approved as corrected.

**Request from the Undergraduate Honor System to Wear Special Sashes**

The committee began the discussion by asking if the Honor System shouldn't write a proposal for this request. Would participants include only the justices? Tassel colors are associated with each college. Honors students wear college-colored sashes, and international students wear sashes indicating his/her country. Would this be opening a Pandora's box to allow the Honor System to wear special sashes?

Vernon supported the idea of trying to promote academic integrity, but noted that those who really need to hear the message would not be attending the Commencement ceremonies. Henneke will ask the Honor System for a proposal for the December meeting. (Proposal Attached.)

**Planning for Fall Commencement**

Michelle Jefferson began the discussion by asking questions about the availability of caps and gowns, and about the graduate school reception following the ceremony. It was indicated to her and everyone present that the information is printed in the Fall Commencement Brochure. Michelle was given several copies to take with her.

Another issue was that of the non-availability of diplomas at the fall ceremony. The envelope that students are handed when they cross the stage contains other information, but not the diploma. Diplomas are mailed in the spring. However, as soon as grades are processed, the student's transcript provides proof of graduation. Conger mentioned that we are one of very few universities that actually provide diplomas in the spring. Henneke mentioned that the Commencement Committee reviewed this issue years earlier, and it was determined that because of financial reasons, the diplomas were all printed in the spring. After other remarks, it was decided that this issue should be revisited, but it could not be remedied for this fall's ceremony. It would require faculty getting the grades in earlier, and the review of the financial resources. Henneke will work with O'Rourke regarding this issue.

### **Discussion Regarding the Need for Special Security Measures at Cassell Coliseum**

The Security Measures Subcommittee has met to discuss the Commencement security issues brought up at the November 7 meeting. Henneke will provide a detailed review of the outcome at the December meeting.

Below is a list of comments and discussion items brought forth at the November meeting:

- Although this is looked upon as a happy event with a different array of guests and family than typically attend an athletic event, we should not ignore the current world situation.
- Trained personnel would have to be hired to check purses, camera cases, coats, etc.
- Advance notice would need to be communicated to family and friends attending that packages and gifts would not be allowed into the coliseum. This information should be included in future brochures.
- Special signage would be needed that all guests would be subject to search.
- There would be no re-entry into the coliseum after departure.
- Should gowns be searched? Should we ask students not to put on gowns until they arrive at the coliseum?
- This information should be posted on the VT website, and communicated to students by email from the list serve available through the Registrar's Office.
- Ushers (faculty volunteers) would need special training to assist event staff on how to handle a search. Staff would include VT Police, Physical Plant employees, etc. Because this commencement is so close to Christmas, it may be difficult to hire or recruit additional volunteers without considerable expense.
- Should admission tickets be implemented for future commencements?
- Not only searches, but also other issues should be reviewed such as evacuation and fire safety planning, especially for guests in wheelchairs.
- Additional seating for guests with impaired family members in wheelchairs should be provided.
- Because Cassell does not have ample room, no recessional takes place in the fall ceremony. There is nowhere to go.
- Approximately 1000 graduates are expected with an estimate of 7-8,000 total on site.

Ridinger was asked what measures were taken at basketball games, which are somewhat comparable events. He indicated that those procedures included low-key searches of purses, backpacks, etc., but that no bomb dogs were utilized. Security personnel were hired to backup the events staff.

Use of bomb dogs is not feasible in all situations. It would take approximately two days to search Cassell, and the building would have to be secured for the entire time up until the commencement ceremonies. Hincker did not think that we would want to have any higher security than used at a basketball game.

The Security Measures subcommittee will address these many issues.

### **December graduates' requests to walk in the spring**

Because of the late date for this year's fall Commencement Ceremony, the Registrar's Office has received requests from fall graduates to process in the spring. The committee approved these requests, but noted that a graduate's name would appear in the fall program and not in the spring program, unless the student made other arrangements through the Registrar's Office.

**Other Items**

It was requested that the colleges get faculty volunteers' (ushers') names to Conger and Taylor as soon as possible.

It was noted that the March Commencement Committee meeting was originally scheduled during Spring break. The meeting will now be held on March 13.

## Undergraduate Honor System Proposal

November 8, 2001

The Virginia Tech Undergraduate Honor System is an integral part of the University. We are a student run organization. All of the students involved in the honor system are full time students who are volunteers. The Honor System serves the university population. Whenever there is an honor code violation, we investigate it and perform a judicial hearing. At a university this large, that is quite an accomplishment. Typically, we get over 100 cases per semester. Although the bulk of our cases come into the office at the end of the semester, we do have cases turned in during the semester. This means that we are constantly running cases.

Currently, there are seven Associate Justices in the Honor System. We are in charge of investigating the case once it is submitted to the office, and then running the judicial hearing. We call this processing the case. The Associate Justices work very hard to process these cases in a timely fashion. We all know how important it is for everyone involved in the case to have his or her case run quickly and efficiently. Last year, the six Associate Justices processed over 500 cases for the year. This is quite a feat by itself, but we were all full time students also.

We are proposing that members of the Honor System be permitted to wear a sash or a cord of a certain color to recognize that a vast service was given to the University. Ideally, these sashes or cords would be either orange or maroon. This would be unique in that only the Virginia Tech Honor System would be wearing them. Since these colors are our school colors, and our school motto is "Ut Prosim," we feel that these colors would be beneficial to show our dedication and service to the University.

The Honor System consists of Student Associate Justices and student Panel Members. We would like to see the Associate Justices get recognized for what they have done for the Honor System, but we would also like to give the Panel Members some recognition too. The panel members are just as much of an integral part of the Honor System as the Associate Justices are.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter.

Sincerely,  
Amanda Cockrell  
Associate Chief Justice

**COMMENCEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**  
**Wednesday, December 5, 2001**  
**12:15 to 12:55 p.m.**  
**President's Boardroom, 210 Burruss Hall**

**PRESENT:** John Beach for Bill Elvey, Randy Billingsley, Bud Brown, Stan Burke, Bill Conger, Reba Crawford, Pat Goodrich, Ed Henneke, Michelle Jefferson, Brad Klein, Mary Ann Lewis for Janet Johnson, David McKee, Kim O'Rourke, Harry Robertshaw, Sherry Schofield-Tomshin, Bill Stringer for J. Allen, Dan Taylor, Audrey Zink-Sharp.

**GUESTS:** Susan Angle, Richard McCoy, Lt. Jack Ridinger, Lyndell Price, David McKee, Patty Mitchell, Amanda Cockrell.

**ABSENT:** Grant Hill, Larry Hincker, Mitzi Vernon, Dixie Reaves, Erin Miller, Margie Murray

Chairman Henneke called the meeting to order at 12:15 p.m.

**Approval of the November 7, 2001 Minutes**

Mary Ann Lewis moved that the minutes be approved, Kim O'Rourke seconded, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

**Request from the undergraduate Honor System to wear special sashes**

Amanda Cockrell, representing the Honor System, brought a maroon, braided rope sash that the graduating students who have served as Honor System panel members and associate justices are proposing to wear in the commencement ceremony. At any one time, there would be no more than ten Honor System students graduating. Discussion ensued regarding other areas of service work that may request special recognition. It was noted that international students were previously given permission to wear sashes depicting the colors of their country. Another issue was whether granting permission to the undergraduate Honor System members to wear sashes would have to be expanded to include students who work with the university's other three honor systems. A decision on the proposal was finally tabled due to the fact that the deadline had passed for adding a description of the significance of the sash to the descriptions of the various components of academic regalia listed in the Fall Commencement Program, which has already gone to press. The proposal will be discussed at a later meeting with possible consideration for spring commencement. With no motion being made from the committee to continue discussion or to vote on the Honor System proposal, Chairman Henneke focused the discussion on the next item on the agenda concerning the winter commencement.

**Final Plans:**

Lt. Jack Ridinger of the VT Police Department outlined plans to follow the basic security plan for Fall Commencement at the Coliseum that is used for large events on campus such as basketball and football games. With regard to commencement, the University

Registrar, Wanda Dean, will send a message over the listserv to graduating graduate and undergraduate students requesting that they share with their guests that all packages, purses, and persons attending commencement are subject to search. Attendees are being encouraged to leave packages in their vehicles, especially gifts that will be subject to being unwrapped and searched if brought inside the Coliseum. Graduates will need to carry regalia into the Coliseum and then put the gowns on once they reach their designated area. In addition, signage will be posted in the entrance to parking lots and on the walkway to the Coliseum advising those who are entering the building that, for security precautions, all packages, purses, persons are subject to search. A suggestion was made that students hand out flyers in the parking areas, however, with so many areas for parking, it would be impossible to cover them. It was felt signage in and around the Coliseum was sufficient. Parking areas directly around the Coliseum will be blocked to prevent anyone parking near the building. Officers will be stationed at the banks of doors entering from Washington Street, Spring Road, and the lower level of the Coliseum. Only those in wheelchairs will be allowed access into the Jamerson Center entrance.

Richard McCoy of Parking Services indicated that he will send a message through the Deans, Directors and Department Heads listserv to advise faculty and staff regarding the changes to parking access and areas that will be blocked off beginning Thursday evening.

Security will consist of 6 officers and event staff at the Graduate School Commencement and 12 officers and the event staff at the University Commencement. John Beach indicated that Physical Plant staff would be posted around the building. The Coliseum has no central fire alarm system so each of the staff members and officers are being advised to call the central police station to report any sign of smoke or fire. A meeting with the State Fire Marshal is being coordinated to learn more about safety precautions before spring commencement.

Randy Billingsley has agreed to find out the time of the College of Business breakfast that will be held on Saturday morning in the Bowman Room and whether the attendees will have tickets to the event. He will relay this information to Chairman Henneke who requested it so that the hours the Coliseum doors will be opened could be coordinated to accommodate those who need to be in the building and to advise staff who may need to check tickets for those entering the building.

The committee suggested adding an announcement at the beginning of the commencement program regarding turning cell phones off. Kim O'Rourke will have an announcement to this effect included in the scripts for both the graduate and undergraduate ceremonies.

The committee discussed the feasibility of issuing diplomas being received at the fall commencement ceremonies. It seems unlikely that the university will be able to hand out the actual diplomas due to economic and security issues related to the printing of the diplomas, coupled with difficulty in the timeframe for grades to be received and recorded. Chairman Henneke has a meeting scheduled with the Registrar and will report back to the Committee.

### **Update on Tom Tillar's proposal for VT academic regalia**

Chairman Henneke reported to the committee that the proposal for new VT regalia has been referred by letter to the Commission on Faculty Affairs, Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies, and the Faculty Senate. Approval from these groups and what other groups that may need to be identified should be obtained before the gown is used in commencement ceremonies. Further, the university's logo and seal are trademarked, so the vendor will have to receive a license from the university. Committee members were asked to advise any students who may have inadvertently been told that they could order the regalia for commencement that the proposal is still under consideration.

With no further business to discuss, Bud Brown moved for adjournment, and the meeting adjourned at 12:55 p.m.

There will be no meeting in January. The next meeting will be Wednesday, February 6, 2002, at 12:15 p.m. in the President's Board Room, 210 Burruss.

**COMMENCEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**  
**Wednesday, February 6, 2002**  
**12:15 to 12:55 p.m.**  
**President's Boardroom, 210 Burruss Hall**

**PRESENT:** John Beach for Bill Elvey, Randy Billingsley, Bill Conger, Pat Goodrich, Ed Henneke, Michelle Jefferson, Brad Klein, Mary Ann Lewis for Janet Johnson, David McKee, Kim O'Rourke, Harry Robertshaw, Sherry Schofield-Tomshin, Bill Stringer for J. Allen, Dan Taylor.

**GUESTS:** Lyndell Price, David McKee, Margie Murray, Julie Kamienski, Shannon Daley, Mary Price.

**ABSENT:** Bill Green, Audrey Zink-Sharp, Stan Burke, Bud Brown, Reba Crawford, Grant Hill, Larry Hincker, Mitzi Vernon, Dixie Reaves, Erin Miller.

Chairman Henneke called the meeting to order at 12:20 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes** – January 2, 2002

Conger moved that the minutes be approved, Stringer seconded, and the minutes were approved as submitted.

**Announcements**

It was announced by O'Rourke that the Spring Commencement Speaker would be The Honorable Mark Warner, Governor of Virginia. The Graduate School ceremony speaker will be Dr. Lucinda Roy.

**Planning for Spring Commencement**

Before the discussion of planning began, Dave McKee asked for the support of the Commencement Committee regarding a proposal he would be putting forward for Dr. Steger's review. The proposal was for an expanded band tour of area high schools, including Charlottesville, West Springfield, Brook Pointe, and Robinson. It was agreed that this would be an excellent way to promote Virginia Tech. Conger moved that the committee support this plan, and with a second from Robertshaw, the proposal was approved unanimously.

Beach began the planning discussion by indicating that there would be stadium use problems for Spring Commencement. Vehicles would not be allowed on the field, and stakes could not be driven into the sod. The field does have a paved path on the sidelines for vehicle operation, and the field drains better should inclement weather be a factor. Placing chairs on the field would not be a concern, but a processional would not be possible due to the construction at the south end of the stadium. This would mean that the standard truck used for the sound system would not be allowed to drive onto the field as usual, and no scaffolding could be used. A boom truck would need to be reserved to hold the speakers for the sound system in the air. This would actually create a less offensive line of site during the ceremony, but would cost an additional \$2000 that the committee has not anticipated.

As for the processional, it was determined that students would be seated on the field, but not by college or department. The actual script would be changed to ask each Dean to recognize graduates by college. Participants would need to be seated on the field by 8:30 a.m. to avoid confusion. Students would be asked to enter onto the field by way of the tunnel at the north end by Jamerson. It was suggested that students not enter the stadium by way of the stands, as this would create a sense of disarray.

The next area of discussion involved the purchase of new carpet for the floor of Cassell Coliseum. The current carpet has been used for several years and has become worn and stained. In addition, the backing has been damaged due to continued use and has required nailing, taping, and ironing to smooth onto the floor to avoid tripping. A new carpet had been reviewed and ordered, which will have a more tolerant backing. The final decision was made to purchase a Mannington carpet in the color of nuance for approximately \$24,000, which had been budgeted in this year's Commencement funds. The carpet will arrive in time for spring commencement.

The representative from the Graduate School indicated that the Alumni Association provided VT lapel pins for the fall graduates and hoped to acquire these for the spring ceremony as well.

Margie Murray provided information to the committee that would be included on the Virginia Tech homepage under the parents/family subheading. This information would remain on the website year-round, and would require minimal updates. The same information would be included in the brochure and on the commencement hotline to assist students and parents with planning throughout the year. It was requested that this information be reported in the Collegiate Times and Spectrum to help get the word out that this information is available for review.

As of February 28, the website and hotline have been updated with new information.

With the announcement that the next meeting would be held on March 13, the meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

**COMMENCEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**  
**Wednesday, March 13, 2002**  
**12:15 p.m.**  
**President's Boardroom, 210 Burruss Hall**

**PRESENT:** Ed Henneke, Kim O'Rourke, Larry Hincker, Bill Stringer for J. Allen, Bill Conger, John Beach for B. Elvey, Mitzi Vernon, Stan Burke, Sherry Schofield-Thomschin, Brad Klein, Erin Miller.

**GUESTS:** Margie Murray, Lyndell Price, Jack Ridinger, Mary Price, Julie Kamienski, Shannon Daley.

**ABSENT:** Dixie Reaves, Dan Taylor, Pat Goodrich, Bill Green, Bud Brown, Randy Billingsley, Harry Robertshaw, Audrey Zink-Sharp, Mary Ann Lewis, Reba Crawford, Grant Hill, Michelle Jefferson.

Chairman Henneke called the meeting to order at 12:20 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes** – February 2, 2002

Conger moved that the minutes be approved, Schofield-Tomschin seconded, and the minutes were approved as submitted.

**Planning for Spring Commencement**

Processional/Seating

Discussion continued regarding the University Commencement Ceremony scheduled at Lane Stadium. As the last meeting it was determined that students would be seated on the field, but not by college or department. Participants would need to enter the field through the tunnel at the north end of the stadium by Jamerson Athletic Center and be seated on the field by 8:30 a.m. Taylor mentioned his concern about the students being seated by 8:30 a.m. and the resulting confusion this would create. Henneke indicated that he would be talking further with Hincker to arrange to have videos shown on the Jumbo Tron to capture the students' attention. It was decided that faculty participants and graduate students from Friday's ceremony be the only individuals on the field with special seating. Marshals will be on the field by 7:45 a.m. to assist with seating and directions.

From where would the stage party process? John Beach suggested that they should come from the dugout or by a selected location inside Cassell. It was agreed that the stage party gather in the practice gym in Cassell Coliseum as usual, and then process through the tunnel. Just before the stage party begins the processional, the tunnel would be blocked of all other traffic with the exception of the stage party.

It was asked whether or not moving the stage to the south end zone would allow a processional to be held. If this were the case, the students sitting on the field would not be facing the Jumbo Tron. Either way, Beach indicated that there would be sound problems. The stage will continue to be located at the north end zone facing the south end zone for this year.

Parking/Security Issues

Ridinger indicated that the usual traffic posts were planned for Commencement ceremonies and that extra event staff would need to be hired for security checks. He did say there were a few problems in the fall with small wrapped gifts being brought to the coliseum. It has been decided

that only the main gates to Lane Stadium will be open on Saturday morning for guests. These are the gates closest to Jamerson Athletic Center where the "Will Call" box is located. Guests may proceed from the main gates under the north stands to the east side of Lane Stadium. This would eliminate the need for a large number of event staff for security at numerous gates. Again, handicap parking will be available in the first bay of the coliseum parking lot.

Security for other college events on campus was addressed. Ridinger indicated that all 38 officers will be on hand for traffic posting and special needs, but the police department would not be able to provide officers for security purposes at each college event. The Commencement budget does not have the funds to hire event staff or town police for college ceremonies, but colleges may hire their own staff if they wish.

#### Other Items

It was reported that the Committee on Academic Support, which reports to the Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies, voted unanimously that diplomas should not be provided at Spring Commencement. Research will be done to determine where the issue stands within the university governance system approval process.

There will be a Friday, May 10 rehearsal for the Graduate School ceremony beginning at Cassell Coliseum at 8:00 a.m. then will move to Lane Stadium for the University ceremony rehearsal.

The meeting adjourned at 12:58 p.m.

**COMMENCEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**  
**Wednesday, April 3, 2002**  
**12:15 p.m.**  
**President's Boardroom, 210 Burruss Hall**

**PRESENT:** Kim O'Rourke, Bill Stringer for J. Allen, Bill Conger, Dixie Reaves, Dan Taylor, Pat Goodrich, John Beach for B. Elvey, Stan Burke, Bill Green, Randy Billingsley, Sherry Schofield-Tomschin, Harry Robertshaw, Audrey Zink-Sharp, Mary Ann Lewis, Reba Crawford.

**GUESTS:** Margie Murray, Lyndell Price, Jack Ridinger, Dave McKee, Allen Miller, Debra Duncan, Jennie Reilly, Julie Kamienski, Shannon Daley, Steve Mouras.

**ABSENT:** Ed Henneke, Larry Hincker, Mitzi Vernon, Bud Brown, Brad Klein, Erin Miller, Grant Hill, Michelle Jefferson.

Bill Conger, representing Ed Henneke, called the meeting to order at 12:15 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes – March 13, 2002**

Kim O'Rourke reported on an issue that was raised at the March 13 meeting by another committee member. At that time, it was noted that the Committee on Academic Support (CAS), which reports to the Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies (CUSP), had voted unanimously that diplomas should not be provided at the Spring Commencement. O'Rourke subsequently spoke with Nadine Hughes in the Registrar's Office, who is the person responsible for preparing the CUSP minutes. According to Hughes, although the 12/5/01 minutes of CAS were brought forward to CUSP on 12/10/01 (and to University Council on 2/4/02), the resolution itself never went beyond CAS and therefore has not received the necessary approvals to go into effect. Hughes confirmed that the Registrar's Office is indeed working to have diplomas ready for distribution at Spring Commencement.

With two spelling corrections requested, Burke moved that the minutes be approved, O'Rourke seconded, and the minutes were approved with two minor changes.

**Planning for Spring Commencement**

Taylor began by indicating that he had heard from four colleges regarding the marshal and usher assignments. Since the spring commencement would not involve the normal procession, additional marshals were requested to assist with seating. Conger noted that the Jumbotron would contain approximately 13-14 minutes of Virginia Tech ad material to play prior to the stage party procession.

In prior years, the handicap ramp was not needed on the stage, and it was requested that we let John Beach know if it would be needed this year. Currently, there is no one on the stage party in need of special access.

Ridinger mentioned that at the March meeting the count of 38 police officers was provided as the number planned to be on duty May 11. The number is in fact 36 officers, many of whom will be on traffic duty. He brought to the attention of Beach that the handicap access van needs to run guests to the East side of the stands for special seating in Lane Stadium, and mentioned the expected

high level of pedestrian traffic on Spring Road. It was suggested that the handicap access van be run in and out of the Southgate gate.

Beach will work with the contractors to map necessary routes and report at the May 1 meeting. Beach said that he may have to go back to sound scaffolds, and hoped to have one south port open for access and rescue needs.

At this meeting it was determined that the main gates would be the only gates open for pedestrian traffic. Laurie Roop is working with Margie Murray to hire event staff to check guests' bags as they enter the stadium. Based on the fact that the main gates are to be the only gates open, it was determined that 14 event staff would be hired for Saturday's ceremony in Lane Stadium, and 10 event staff for Friday's ceremony in Cassell Coliseum.

It was determined that the Virginia Tech Police Department could not provide security for individual college ceremonies. The majority of officers available are to be used for traffic duty and emergency needs. There simply are not enough officers to go around. The Commencement Committee would not have the funds to hire additional officers or event staff for security requests for individual college ceremonies.

Colleges may determine security needs on their own. Conger indicated that college ushers could not be used for bag checks due to liability issues. Chief Duncan asked the committee why people felt the need for security at the individual college ceremonies. Basically, the security measures taken at the main commencement ceremonies on Friday and Saturday are no different than arrangements made for basketball or football games and have become the norm since the tragedy of September 11.

When asked what Chief Duncan thought the colleges should consider, she indicated that the VT Police Department is dealing with emergencies on a case-by-case basis and is not doing many things differently now, based on experience and talks with other universities. There have been no recent threats that should concern the general population. Should a college determine they want to hire event staff to check guests' bags, they may contact Laurie Roop directly at 951-4365.

There was a question of whether the FAA guidelines/restrictions regarding air space were still in effect near the stadium as they were in the fall during football season. Steve Mouras indicated that the restrictions have been lifted and didn't feel there would be a need to reinforce those for Commencement.

### **Other Business**

David McKee announced that the university had once again approved funding for the Wind Symphony tour to Charlottesville and Northern Virginia on May 8-10, preceding their performance at the university's commencement ceremony on May 11.

The Northern Virginia Center requested use of the old mace for their ceremony on May 12. Until the old mace is moved to the museum in the new Alumni and Conference Center, it may be used for this purpose. Additionally, Dr. Steger offered the use of the small replica of the new mace that was given to him at his installation in 2000.

Jenny Reilly noted that the interpreters have asked for copies of all speeches prior to the ceremonies.

The meeting adjourned at 12:52 p.m.

**COMMENCEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**  
**Wednesday, May 1, 2002**  
**12:15 p.m.**  
**President's Boardroom, 210 Burruss Hall**

**PRESENT:** Ed Henneke, Kim O'Rourke, Larry Hincker, Bill Stringer for J. Allen, Bill Conger, Dixie Reaves, Mitzi Vernon, Dan Taylor, Pat Goodrich, John Beach for B. Elvey, Stan Burke, Bill Green, Randy Billingsley, Sherry Schofield-Tomschin, Harry Robertshaw, Audrey Zink-Sharp, Mary Ann Lewis, Reba Crawford.

**GUESTS:** Margie Murray, Lyndell Price, Jack Ridinger, Jennie Reilly, Julie Kamienski, Shannon Daley, Steve Mouras, Susan Angle, D. Lewis (BT), Tim Witlen (BT).

**ABSENT:** Bud Brown, Brad Klein, Erin Miller, Grant Hill, Michelle Jefferson.

Ed Henneke called the meeting to order at 12:15 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes** – April 3, 2002 Meeting

The minutes from the April 3 meeting were approved unanimously as written. Dr. Henneke provided further update on the matter reported in the April 3 minutes about the Committee on Academic Support proposal not to hand out diplomas at the Spring ceremony. He learned from a member of the Commission on Faculty Affairs that the proposal was essentially dead because the individual who made the proposal received much opposition from faculty, students, and alumni.

**Handicap Access**

Jenny Reilly distributed, for review and comment, guidelines she had drafted for the smaller ceremonies. She requested that each department do a walk-through of their ceremony a day before with the physical accessibility checklist.

**Jumbotron**

A video was shown of Virginia Tech infomercials that will be aired prior to the University Commencement Ceremony on the Jumbotron. Randy Stith has arranged this detail and the tape will be looped to replay as guests are being seated. The tape will begin at 8:15 a.m. and continue to 8:45 a.m. At 8:45 a.m., the music begins. Larry Hincker will let Athletics know that the Jumbotron will be used.

**Concessions**

The question as to whether or not concession stands would be open was discussed. In the April 2000 minutes the committee voted against having the concession stands open. Alternatively, the caterer could provide 1500 bottles of water at \$0.75 each. Conger moved to have concessions open, O'Rourke seconded the motion, and all approved. It was determined that due to the early arrival of guests the concessions would be opened.

It was also noted that the first aid stations would have water. The committee suggested that all the soft drink machines be refilled prior to the ceremonies on Friday and Saturday.

### **Honor Judge Sashes**

The judges of the honor court requested that they be allowed to wear special sashes at Commencement. The committee felt that since the honors sashes would not be based on academic achievement as other sashes are, they should not be approved.

### **Pedestrian Routing**

It was reported that the new gates at Lane Stadium will be open and that extra staff would be hired to man them. There will be no pedestrian access from the southwest end of the stadium, only the BT paratransit van. The van will cycle from Wallace to the Coliseum lot. If the colleges have transportation issues, BT will provide buses or vans upon request on Commencement day. The shuttle will run behind the east stands. The Coliseum lot will be used for stage party parking, handicap parking, and other special needs. After 8:45 a.m. anyone would be allowed to park in that area. The tennis court parking lot will be available on Friday until 4 p.m. for the stage party only.

### **Stage Party**

Refreshments will be provided in the practice gym on Saturday prior to the University ceremony. The stage and sound system should be checked to ensure that the stage party members can hear the program. At 8:30 a.m., officers will stop all traffic into the tunnel to prepare for the procession of the stage party. After 8:30 a.m., late arriving students can gain access to the playing field through the stands in sections 8 and 14 on the west side.

Signs will be posted on the stadium gates that only Commencement officers would be allowed on the playing field. The marshals will be stationed at the tunnel exit onto the field to direct graduating students. The west side sidewalk will be used to escort guests of the stage party to the President's Box.

### **Security**

As with the fall ceremony, additional events staff will be hired. A total of 18 event staff will be requested for the Saturday ceremony. Margie Murray will contact Laurie Roop.

Without any further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:08 p.m.