

**Commencement Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, September 7, 2005**  
**12:15 p.m.**  
**President's Boardroom, 210 Burruss Hall**

**Present:** Ed Henneke, Bill Stringer for Jerry Allen, Bud Brown, Deborah Cook, Russell Davis, Sam Easterling, Jerry Gibson, Mark Owczarski for Larry Hincker, Jean Kampe, Jerry Niles, Kim O'Rourke, Lyndell Price, Dixie Reaves, Dean Stauffer, Dan Taylor

**Absent:** Sumeet Bagai, Ellington Graves, Bill Green, Brian James, Brad Klein

**Guests:** Patrick Casey, Hunter Gresham, April Myers, Jennie Reilly, Laura Wedin, Eric Wininger

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

Henneke requested introductions be made so that everyone can become familiar with each other.

**Approval of Minutes**

O'Rourke moved that the minutes for the May 5, 2005, meeting be approved as written. With a second from Cook the minutes were approved unanimously.

**Recap of Spring Ceremonies**

Henneke asked if there were any problems that need to be brought to the attention of the committee or any good comments.

Reaves indicated that the physical plant workers did a great job setting up for the ceremony. Taylor mentioned that most of the problems for the ushers were created by the stadium construction. He also suggested getting signage for special needs seating for future ceremonies.

Henneke informed the committee that one letter of complaint was received concerned with the way guests were rushed out of the venue after the ceremony for Apparel, Housing and Resource Management, Human Development, and Teaching and Learning on Saturday. Henneke stated that the committee is free to step in during any part of Commencement, but he recommended that issues with Saturday ceremonies are better left to the departments. Henneke mentioned that the committee will try to help with scheduling venues for Saturday ceremonies in order to coordinate the proper venue with the number of students graduating. Owczarski questioned whether The Inn at Virginia Tech could provide additional venues for the Saturday ceremonies. Henneke indicated that the ballroom will seat around 800 people for dinner, which would make a good venue for a Saturday ceremony. Owczarski then questioned if Donaldson Brown would still be available for use as well. Gresham indicated that there is already a block put on all venues where Saturday ceremonies are held for the president's office in order to determine what venues will be used for each ceremony. [Note: O'Rourke asked Margie Murray to reserve Latham Ballroom and any other suitable spaces at The Inn for Commencement.]

Gibson questioned if there was a problem with the distribution of programs at the University ceremony. Taylor indicated that the problem was that guests were using a different entrance than was anticipated, and the majority of the programs were at a different entrance. Once the issue was discovered, it was too crowded to get a vehicle to that entrance to deliver programs.

### **Selection of student speakers for University Commencement Ceremony**

Henneke indicated that the discussion began last May about how it was determined that class officers would serve as the student speakers for the University ceremony. Henneke conferred with Carole Nickerson (a former Commencement Committee member from the 1980's and 1990's) on the history of how this was determined. He related that there was a threat in the late 1980's to eliminate the University Commencement ceremony altogether. In 1980's the ceremonies were held in the stadium, but the students did not sit on the field. Rather, the students sat in the bottom rows of the stands, below the guests. In the mid to late 1980's the graduates became very unruly. They acted as if they were just watching the event, but not part of it. The students would also bring in bottles of champagne and inundate faculty, thus ruining expensive regalia. The committee was established to determine what could be done to either improve the situation or discontinue the university ceremony altogether. The committee recommended that the graduates sit on the field. By doing this, the students became the center of attention and the behavior of the graduates improved. The committee also recommended that students participate as part of the stage party. The question then was how to determine which students would be given this honor. The committee considered several options as to the selection of the student speakers, which included a lottery, elections, and an essay competition. It was determined that the best approach would be to have speakers that are elected by the entire student class, and the class officers are the only students that are elected by the entire class. The committee then approved giving the honor of being a member of the stage party to the class officers.

Henneke indicated that there was a request last year to change the process by which the student speakers are selected. He then put this request before the committee to discuss. Gibson questioned how speakers are handled for the Graduate School ceremony. Henneke stated that the Graduate School functions similar to an individual college in that the dean has developed a method to select the graduate speakers. Henneke then indicated that the committee's main focus is the University ceremony and not the individual ceremonies. Reaves then questioned if the students have a mechanism for gathering feedback from their peers on how the students should be selected. Davis indicated that in the past his class has used surveys via email to gather feedback for things such as the class ring design. Taylor suggested getting feedback from the students first before moving ahead with any decision on the selection of the student speakers. Davis agreed to send a survey to the student class in order to get feedback on how the student speakers should be chosen.

### **New Business**

The Fall Commencement ceremony will be on December 16, 2005. The times are 11:00 a.m. for the University ceremony and 3:00 p.m. for the Graduate ceremony. It was also determined that since the stadium lights will be working, the Spring ceremonies (Friday) will be moved back to the original times.

With no other business, Brown moved to adjourn at 12:40 p.m.

**Commencement Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, October 5, 2005**  
**12:15 p.m.**  
**President's Boardroom, 210 Burruss Hall**

**Present:** Dan Taylor, Sumeet Bagai, Bill Stringer for Jerry Allen, Jerry Via for Bud Brown, Quinton Nottingham for Deborah Cook, Russell Davis, Sam Easterling, Larry Hincker, Brad Klein, Kim O'Rourke, Lyndell Price, Dixie Reaves, Dean Stauffer

**Absent:** Ed Henneke, Karen DePauw, Jerry Gibson, Ellington Graves, Bill Green, Jean Kampe, Brian James, Jerry Niles

**Guests:** Patrick Casey, April Myers, Carole Nickerson, Jennie Reilly, Eric Wininger

Dr. Taylor chaired the meeting in the absence of Dr. Henneke. He called the meeting to order at 12:17 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes**

Easterling moved that the minutes for the September 7, 2005, meeting be approved as written. With a second from Bagai, the minutes were approved unanimously.

**Selection of student speakers for University Commencement Ceremony**

Taylor introduced Carole Nickerson, who held the position which is now titled Chief of Staff to the president for twelve years. She explained that the Spring Commencement of 1989 was universally regarded as the worst Commencement debacle the university had ever seen. The situation created a lot of negative publicity for the university.

Dr. McComas, who was president at that time, decided to form a task force to examine what needed to be done to have a successful ceremony. The task force was given the better part of a year to make recommendations on ways to improve the ceremony. Dr. McComas indicated that if the task force did not come up with a change of plan that would make the ceremony more dignified and celebratory, he would prefer to not have the ceremony at all. After months of reviewing the ceremonies of other universities and interviewing different groups on campus, the task force came up with what is used today.

The task force recommended that the students sit on the field instead of the in the stands, where they had sat previously. By doing this, the ceremony was made to be more impressive and helped to get away from a "football" atmosphere.

It was also decided to contract Stage Sound to provide a speaker system which supplied real sound to everyone, including the students. Not being able to hear the ceremony was one of the factors contributing to poor student behavior.

The task force also recommended having student participation in the ceremony. There were several proposals as to what should be the selection process. The student members of the task force did not want students chosen that were already favorably known to the administration, award winners, or students chosen by faculty playing favorites. The students wanted representatives that were typical students. They proposed that the student speakers should be chosen from among the class officers because this was the only way to have a truly representative group of students from which to select. The class officers hold that position for life and being the student speakers for Commencement helps aid in future alumni relations and events by giving them exposure on stage and in the program.

Nickerson indicated that this arrangement has worked very well, and the quality of the student remarks have been uniformly very good.

O'Rourke questioned whether there were ever any questions from any students about the selection process after the changes were implemented. Nickerson stated that was never any questions about the process, but she has heard that recently there has been a suggestion that the Board of Visitors representative should be the speaker. Nickerson stated that in her opinion, the representatives to the board are not necessarily representative of students in general because the board, not the student body, chooses the student representatives.

Bagai then suggested that before surveying the students on the selection of student speakers, the class officer for 2006, 2007, and 2008 met to evaluate the process of why the class officers were chosen to be the speakers at the Commencement ceremony. Bagai indicated that there are several different student leaders on campus, but the only group elected solely to represent one class is the class officers. Because of the online voting systems, over half of the class participates in class officer elections.

Bagai then informed the committee that the responsibility of the class officers is to take their class and tie it in to Virginia Tech while on campus and as alumni. He then indicated that the biggest task the class system has is to coordinate the ring tradition since over half of the class buys a class ring. The class officers gather information from class surveys to incorporate student ideas and suggestions for the ring. The ring premier, the ring dance, and a kickoff concert to get students excited about the class ring are events that culminate with the Senior Celebration and with graduation. Bagai then indicated that class officers are closely advised by Tom Tillar and Debbie Day in Alumni because the class officers will play a key role after graduation helping to organize reunions.

Bagai concluded that because the responsibilities of class officers are solely to their class, it is logical for the class officers to participate in the Commencement ceremony as the student speakers.

Casey questioned if there are hesitations to surveying the class. Bagai indicated that he is not sure what the response rate would be, and the class officers did not want to create unnecessary questions from the student class. Bagai confirmed that the class officers have not been questioned by anyone from the student body at large about the selection process of student speakers; thus, it does not appear to be an issue among the student population.

O'Rourke indicated that to her knowledge only one or two students have ever questioned the selection process of the student speakers.

Taylor summarized that there does not appear to be a reason to change the way student speakers are chosen for the Commencement ceremony, and no action from the committee is indicated. The class officers will remain the students to speak during the Commencement ceremony.

### **Planning for Fall Commencement**

Price indicated that he needed funds in order to begin the process. O'Rourke indicated that she would get the proper forms to him.

O'Rourke then mentioned that the brochure would be mailed out by the end of October. She also indicated that the Commencement website and hotline are up to date.

Taylor indicated that he would be getting the recruiting memo out to the ushers and marshals soon. Reaves reminded the college representatives to make sure that those on the volunteer list know they are volunteering.

O'Rourke requested the faculty names being recommended for the Commencement speaker, and Bagai stated he would get that information to her.

Casey questioned whether or not he was the music liaison for the Fall Commencement ceremony. Myers confirmed that he was the contact person for any part of the ceremony pertaining to music.

Reilly indicated that there is a staff meeting with the ADA architect to discuss signage for the ceremony, and she will get that information in time for the printing of the brochure. Price indicated that he would need a few weeks' notice in order to complete the signs.

Price stated that he would need to know if the musicians would be providing their own lighting on stage or if Physical Plant would need to provide the lighting. Casey indicated the he will get that information soon.

O'Rourke questioned the condition of the carpet, and Price indicated that it is okay.

With no other business, O'Rourke moved to adjourn at 12:50 p.m.

**Commencement Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, November 2, 2005**  
**12:15 p.m.**  
**President's Boardroom, 210 Burruss Hall**

**Present:** Ed Henneke, Chuck Payne for Jerry Allen, Sumeet Bagai, Bud Brown, Chris Zobel for Deborah Cook, Sam Easterling, Ellington Graves, Larry Hincker, Jean Kampe, Brad Klein, Jerry Niles, Kim O'Rourke, Dixie Reaves, Dean Stauffer, Dan Taylor

**Absent:** Russell Davis, Karen DePauw, Jerry Gibson, Bill Green, Brian James, Navin Manjooran, Lyndell Price

**Guests:** Hunter Gresham, Margie Murray, April Myers, Jennie Reilly

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

Henneke publicly thanked Dan Taylor for chairing the meeting in October, and Sumeet Bagai for a wonderful presentation last month on behalf of the students.

**Approval of Minutes**

Brown moved that the minutes for the October 5, 2005, meeting be approved as written. With a second from O'Rourke, the minutes were approved unanimously.

**Planning for Fall Commencement**

Henneke questioned if there were any problems with the coliseum for the Commencement ceremony. Beach indicated that there should not be any problems and they are prepared for two ceremonies on Friday, December 16. Henneke then asked if there were any basketball issues to be concerned about. Beach stated that as long as everything is out of the coliseum by Friday evening there should not be any problems.

Reaves questioned when the photo cards would be delivered to the practice gym for the graduates to fill out. Murray indicated that the cards will be delivered two hours prior to the ceremony.

O'Rourke requested the faculty names being recommended for the Commencement speaker, and Bagai stated he would discuss that with her after the meeting. Henneke indicated that getting the recommended names is top priority.

O'Rourke announced that the Graduate School speaker will be Board of Visitors member Phil Thompson.

Henneke announced that the rehearsal for the ceremony will be Thursday, December 15, at 4:00 p.m.

Beach stated that if the musicians need lights for the band stands, he will need to know in advance.

O'Rourke indicated that lunch for the stage party will be in the Bowman Room.

Henneke asked about the employees that park in the coliseum lot. Murray indicated that the coliseum lot is a commuter lot and the students will be gone.

Henneke asked if there were any concerns with the spring ceremony. Beach stated that there is a chance that a portion of the west side will not be completed. Beach then suggested blocking the top tier going up to the press box, and using everything from the lower tier down. This way guests will not be able to enter an unsafe location. Henneke raised the question as to whether the gates on the west side would be open. Beach indicated that there should not be a problem with the west side gates.

Henneke announced that the next meeting will be the first Wednesday in December, which will be followed shortly thereafter by the Fall Commencement ceremonies.

With no other business, Easterling moved to adjourn at 12:25 p.m.

**Commencement Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, December 7, 2005**  
**12:15 p.m.**  
**President's Boardroom, 210 Burruss Hall**

**Present:** Dan Taylor, Bill Stringer for Jerry Allen, Bud Brown, Deborah Cook, Russell Davis, Sam Easterling, Jerry Gibson, Larry Hincker, Jean Kampe, Brad Klein, Navin Manjoooran, Kim O'Rourke, Lyndell Price, Dixie Reaves

**Absent:** Ed Henneke, Sumeet Bagai, Karen DePauw, Ellington Graves, Bill Green, Brian James, Jerry Niles, Dean Stauffer

**Guests:** Wendell Flinchum, Patrick Casey, Margie Murray, April Myers, Jennie Reilly

Dr. Taylor chaired the meeting in the absence of Dr. Henneke. He called the meeting to order at 12:16 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes**

O'Rourke moved that the minutes for the November 2, 2005, meeting be approved as written. With a second from Cook, the minutes were approved unanimously.

**Final Planning for Fall Commencement**

Taylor indicated that this meeting would basically be a check in for Fall Commencement. He reminded the committee that the rehearsal will be on Thursday, December 15, at 4:00 p.m. in the coliseum.

Taylor indicated that there are sufficient usher and marshal volunteers for the ceremony. Reaves informed the committee that instructions for the marshals will be distributed after the meeting. Murray questioned how many parking passes are needed for marshals and ushers. Taylor stated he will need 60 parking passes for ushers and Reaves said she will get a count by the end of the meeting.

Price informed the committee that the sign shop will need to be notified as soon as possible if any signs are needed. Reilly asked about the status of the signage indicating that guests in wheelchairs can have one guest sit with them and the remaining family members will be seated behind them. Price confirmed that these signs are ready.

Taylor asked if there are any issues about the lighting for the band. Casey indicated that he will work with Price to make sure there will be proper lighting.

Murray indicated that there were approximately 1,100 undergraduates that are eligible to graduate. Reaves stated that she needs the number of graduates per college to determine the proper seating arrangement. O'Rourke asked Murray to obtain the number of graduates per college.

Kampe asked if the Commencement speaker has been revealed yet. Taylor stated that Minnis Ridenour will be the University ceremony speaker and Phil Thompson will be the Graduate School ceremony speaker.



O'Rourke questioned if there are any issues with concessions. Taylor indicated that the concessions should be open and ready for business at least an hour before the ceremony.

Price asked if the programs are ready. Murray indicated that they are being printed and should be ready by December 14.

Murray questioned where the food should be located for the ushers and marshals. Taylor suggested the same location as previous ceremonies.

Casey announced that he will not be present at the ceremony, but he would like to receive feedback for future ceremonies.

Reilly questioned if the handicapped parking will be in the same location as previous ceremonies. Taylor stated that it should be the same location as before.

O'Rourke then mentioned that according to the Inclement Weather Policy if the University is closed on Friday, December 16, there will be no Commencement ceremonies.

With no other business, Brown moved to adjourn at 12:20 p.m.

[Note: Because of inclement weather, the University Ceremony and the Graduate School Ceremony were each delayed by three hours on December 16. Also, the rehearsal on December 15 was cancelled.]

**Commencement Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, February 1, 2006**  
**12:15 p.m.**  
**President's Boardroom, 210 Burruss Hall**

**Present:** Ed Henneke, Bill Stringer for Jerry Allen, Jerry Via for Bud Brown, Deborah Cook, Sam Easterling, Jean Kampe, Brad Klein, Brian Mihalik, Kim O'Rourke, Lyndell Price, Dixie Reaves, Dean Stauffer, Dan Taylor

**Absent:** Sumeet Bagai, Russell Davis, Jerry Gibson, Ellington Graves, Bill Green, Larry Hincker, Brian James, Navin Manjooran, Jerry Niles

**Guests:** Brianna Robinson, Patrick Casey, April Myers, Jennie Reilly, Eric Winger

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

**Approval of Minutes**

Klein moved that the minutes for the December 7, 2005, meeting be approved as written. With a second from Taylor, the minutes were approved unanimously.

**Review of Fall 2005 Commencement**

Henneke questioned if there were any problem areas that need to be addressed. Taylor suggested the placement of heater coils on the roof of the coliseum to prevent ice from forming. Henneke informed the committee that ice was falling off of the coliseum roof the day of the ceremony, and all entrances except the front entrance to the coliseum were blocked off as a safety precaution. Price indicated that having the physical plant employees block off the side entrances was the best way to maintain a safe environment.

Reaves thanked all of the college representatives for getting all of the volunteers. Henneke indicated that he had at least two phone calls prior to the ceremony from volunteers who were substituting for someone who was assigned to be either an usher or marshal, and they indicated that they had not received any instructions on what was expected of them. Henneke then asked if there is an administrative way that could keep track of any substitutes and forward any necessary communications to them. Taylor indicated that the original assigned volunteer is supposed to forward all communications to the substitute. Henneke stated that there are no guarantees that the information will be forwarded to the substitute. Taylor suggested having the instructions posted on the web as a PDF file.

Henneke informed the committee that there were several compliments from people who were thankful that the ceremony time was moved back three hours. This allowed for more travel time due to the inclement weather. [Note: Both the University ceremony and the Graduate School ceremony were delayed by three hours.]

Henneke conveyed that the committee appreciates the time and effort of the student musicians and that they did a great job. There was a miscue, but it was not noticed by most people in the audience. Taylor suggested that perhaps walkie-talkies could be used to improve communications.

### **Committee Support on Wind Symphony Tour**

Henneke then questioned if the committee wanted to support the request from the Music Department for funding for the Wind Symphony tour. In the past, the procedure has been that the committee recommends approval to the EVP's office to support a tour of approximately 60 musicians to various high schools around the state. These musicians will also play at the Spring Commencement ceremony. This tour will take place between exams and the University Commencement ceremony and creates good public relations for Virginia Tech.

Casey indicated that the budget is \$13,000 and covers meals and one night's lodging to provide concerts at schools in Salem, Richmond, and Charlottesville.

Cook made a motion to recommend to the EVP that Virginia Tech support the Wind Symphony tour. O'Rourke seconded the motion. With no further discussion, it passed unanimously.

### **Planning for Spring Commencement**

O'Rourke stated that the Commencement phone line will be updated on Monday, February 13, 2006, and that Margie Murray has the contents to update the website which will be updated soon. She then indicated that April Myers is checking with all the colleges and departments for their contact people, and once that information is received the Commencement space survey will be sent out. Any decisions about ceremony locations should be made by March 1. O'Rourke then informed the committee of the costs to reserve the Latham Ballroom in the Inn at Virginia Tech which seats 640 people and the Theatre, which seats 125.

Henneke then questioned if Governor Kaine has committed to being the University Commencement speaker. O'Rourke indicated that the request is still under consideration. Henneke informed the committee that it has been one of our traditions to always ask the Governor in his first year in office to be the Commencement speaker.

O'Rourke informed the committee that a request had been received from the When U Dream a Dream Foundation to allow Kenny Gibson to speak at the University Commencement ceremony. Kenny Gibson is a seventeen-year-old who was paralyzed in a football accident. He apparently idolizes Michael Vick and through the Dream Foundation Michael called Kenny while he was in the hospital. This was videotaped and broadcast on Fox Channel 5. The Dream Foundation also arranged for Kenny to meet Michael at a practice and gave him an award from the Dream Foundation. Henneke asked if Kenny is a Virginia Tech student. Myers indicated he is still in high school. O'Rourke stated that the only connection is Michael Vick. It was suggested that an athletic event like the Spring Game might be a better venue. Henneke stated that the committee has had requests in the past from politicians and deans of other universities with a son or daughter graduating from Virginia Tech requesting to speak during the Commencement ceremony. Historically the committee has rejected these requests because the University ceremony is intended to honor the students that are graduating.

Price asked if the time of the ceremony will change back to 7:30 p.m. Henneke indicated that the University ceremony will begin at 7:30 p.m.

Henneke questioned the status of the stadium. Price indicated that there will be lights and at least half of the seating on the west side.

O'Rourke then explained that there is still no decision made on how to handle Founder's Day, so the 5 awards will be conferred at the University Commencement ceremony, but none of the recipients will speak, so there should be no significant effect on the length of the ceremony. Henneke expressed concern that the decision last year to have the awards presented during the Commencement ceremony was made outside of the committee and according to the governance policies of the university the committee should be involved with this type of decision. O'Rourke explained that several years ago the Founder's Day format was changed because it had grown into a lengthy ceremony and no one attended. The students that were formerly honored at Founder's Day are now honored in April at the Student Awards Banquet. Faculty and Staff are honored at an event that happens in the fall. Because of these separate events, there is no longer a university setting appropriate to award the Ruffner Medal Award, the University Distinguished Achievement Award, and the Alumni Distinguished Service Awards. O'Rourke indicated that Commencement is the only event that will put these recipients before a large audience, which they deserve. Henneke indicated that the committee should discuss honoring these award recipients and make recommendations. The committee members expressed no objection to conferring these 5 awards at this year's ceremony.

With no other business Taylor moved to adjourn at 12:40 p.m.

**Commencement Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, March 1, 2006**  
**12:15 p.m.**  
**President's Boardroom, 210 Burruss Hall**

**Present:** Ed Henneke, Bill Stringer for Jerry Allen, Deborah Cook, Sam Easterling, Jerry Gibson, Larry Hincker, Brian Mihalik, Kim O'Rourke, Lyndell Price, Dixie Reaves, Dean Stauffer

**Absent:** Sumeet Bagai, Bud Brown, Russell Davis, Ellington Graves, Bill Green, Brian James, Jean Kampe, Brad Klein, Navin Manjooran, Jerry Niles, Dan Taylor

**Guests:** Susan Angle, Patrick Casey, Margie Murray, April Myers, Jennie Reilly, Eric Wininger

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

**Approval of Minutes**

Easterling moved that the minutes for the February 1, 2006, meeting be approved as written. With a second from Stauffer, the minutes were approved unanimously.

**Continued Planning for Spring Commencement**

Murray handed out the current calendar of events for the spring ceremony. Henneke asked the various college representatives to check with their colleges on the times and locations of their ceremonies.

Henneke informed the committee that the funding for the Wind Symphony Tour has been approved by the EVP's office with a minor adjustment relating to the honorarium for the students. Casey and Henneke decided to discuss this matter after the meeting.

Henneke asked if there were any areas of concern for the spring ceremony. Reilly indicated that everything was in order for the ADA office. Price stated that all arrangements have been made for chair and tables, and if anyone needs anything different this year he will need to know as soon as possible.

Henneke pointed out that the National Capital Region ceremony has been moved to 1:00 p.m. on Sunday. Those with a role in the National Capital Region ceremony should contact the Graduate School Dean's office if they wish to reserve a seat on the Hokie Bird.

Reaves asked for recommendations on how to march all four columns into the stadium and maintain the columns until the end of the processional. Henneke informed the committee that the very first time the students marched onto the field it was ran in military fashion. It looked like soldiers marching, but it kept the students in line.

Henneke asked if Governor Kaine has accepted the invitation to be the Commencement speaker. O'Rourke indicated that she has received a verbal confirmation that Governor Kaine will be the speaker for the University ceremony. Henneke then asked if the Graduate School speaker has been lined up. Mihalik indicated that they would be voting on the speaker this week.

Casey indicated that he would like to be more involved in the music for the Graduate School ceremony. He then questioned who the contact is for the Graduate School. Mihalik indicated that he would determine who the contact is and get back to him.

Henneke asked if the same singer from the fall ceremony will be the singer for the spring. Casey indicated that she would and is actually going to be graduating this spring.

With no other business, O'Rourke moved to adjourn at 12:25 p.m.

**Commencement Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, April 5, 2006**  
**12:15 p.m.**  
**President's Boardroom, 210 Burruss Hall**

**Present:** Ed Henneke, Bill Stringer for Jerry Allen, Deborah Cook, Ellington Graves, Larry Hincker, Jean Kampe, Navin Manjooran, Jerry Niles, Kim O'Rourke, Dixie Reaves, Dean Stauffer, Dan Taylor

**Absent:** Sumeet Bagai, Bud Brown, Russell Davis, Sam Easterling, Jerry Gibson, Bill Green, Brian James, Brad Klein, Brian Mihalik, Lyndell Price

**Guests:** John Beach, Angela Marshall, Richard McCoy, Margie Murray, April Myers, Jennie Reilly, Eric Wininger

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

**Approval of Minutes**

Reaves moved that the minutes for the March 1, 2006, meeting be approved as written. With a second from Graves, the minutes were approved unanimously.

**Planning for Spring Commencement**

Henneke informed the committee that the President's box will not be used for the ceremony this year because of the construction, and with the Governor as the Commencement speaker we would not want to expose him to the construction area. Henneke then indicated that it may be worthwhile to use the President's box for future ceremonies because there is ample room to have the buffet dinner and for the stage party to robe. Once the dinner is over, the guests can remain in the President's box and watch the ceremony from there. Then the problem becomes moving the stage party from the President's box to the field. Henneke questioned how to get from the elevator onto the field. O'Rourke was told that one elevator goes all the way down onto the field. Beach indicated that since the elevator is a freight elevator there may be certain regulations that will not allow people to be transported in it. Alternatively, the stage party could ride the elevator down to the concourse level, but then would have to be escorted through the crowd out to the field. Henneke suggested that the committee discuss this at a later date once there is more information available.

Henneke then stated that the Governor Tim Kaine has confirmed that he will be the University speaker for the Spring ceremony. He announced that Gaston Caperton, President of The College Board and former Governor of West Virginia will be the Graduate School Commencement speaker.

Henneke then mentioned that once again the Graduate School has decided that the master's diplomas will not be handed to the graduates on the stage, but instead the graduates can pick up their diplomas at the Graduate Life Center after the ceremony until 6:30 p.m. This would be the second or third year that this process has been used. Henneke questioned why the master's diplomas cannot be given out when the undergraduate and the PhD students receive their diplomas on stage. Before the new process was implemented, all of the graduates received their diplomas on stage. Taylor indicated that part of the reason for this is some of the master's degree candidates that walk are not yet eligible to receive their diploma. Reaves suggested giving just the

diploma cover to those students who are not eligible. Henneke stated that he thought the biggest problem was the amount of time it took to get the diplomas ready. He then suggested setting a deadline for students to confirm their plans to participate in the ceremony. That way the diplomas for those that confirm their participation can be ready for the ceremony. Henneke indicated that a major concern is getting the diplomas in order on the stage because not all of the students that are eligible to graduate actually participate in the Commencement ceremony. Reaves also mentioned that the line up is by discipline and if diplomas are handed out at the ceremony, the line up would have to be alphabetical.

A motion was made to have the Commencement Committee recommend strongly to the Dean of the Graduate School that diplomas be presented to master's degree candidates during the spring Graduate School ceremony beginning as soon as possible and preferably with the spring 2006 ceremony. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Henneke then gave background information on the Senior Challenge, which is a program that was established approximately five to ten years ago in which all the graduating seniors are asked to donate to the Virginia Tech Foundation. The challenge is for each class to do better than the previous class. Three years ago, the Commencement Committee was approached with the concept of having the check presented to the president on behalf of the Senior Challenge at the University Commencement ceremony. The check was presented during Commencement for two years but was not presented last year. O'Rourke indicated that a request has been made to present the check at this year's Commencement ceremony. Hincker moved to allow the Senior Challenge check to be presented during the University Commencement ceremony and O'Rourke seconded the motion. Hincker recommended allowing the check to be presented to Dr. Steger during the Commencement ceremony because this would be a good start to developing private philanthropy. O'Rourke informed the committee that this year the president has agreed to match the Senior Challenge gift. Kampe questioned if the audience was told any information on what the Senior Challenge is. O'Rourke indicated that a brief description is given as to why the check is being presented. After some discussion, the motion passed unanimously. O'Rourke then questioned if the committee would vote on the Senior Challenge presentation every year or if this would be approved for all future ceremonies. Henneke indicated that the motion will include all future ceremonies.

Reilly informed the committee that a request was received from the Blacksburg Transit to change the drop off location for guests with special parking needs. McCoy indicated that the BT requested changing the drop off location on Spring Road between Cassell Coliseum and Lane Stadium. The committee decided to keep the same drop off location in the South End Zone as in previous years.

McCoy indicated that special needs parking will be reserved in the half of the coliseum lot located on Spring Road.

With no other business, Graves moved to adjourn at 12:45 p.m.





**Commencement Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, May 3, 2006**  
**12:15 p.m.**  
**President's Boardroom, 210 Burruss Hall**

**Present:** Ed Henneke, Dave Miller for Jerry Allen, Sumeet Bagai, Jerry Via for Bud Brown, Deborah Cook, Sam Easterling, Jean Kampe, Brian Mihalik, Kim O'Rourke, Lyndell Price, Dixie Reaves, Dean Stauffer

**Absent:** Russell Davis, Jerry Gibson, Ellington Graves, Bill Green, Larry Hincker, Brian James, Brad Klein, Navin Manjooran, Jerry Niles, Dan Taylor

**Guests:** John Beach, Wendell Flinchum, Richard McCoy, Patrick Casey, Margie Murray, April Myers, Jennie Reilly, Eric Wininger

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

**Approval of Minutes**

Easterling moved that the minutes for the April 5, 2006, meeting be approved as written. With a second from O'Rourke, the minutes were approved unanimously.

**Distribution of Master's Diplomas**

Henneke indicated that the Commencement Committee made a strong recommendation to the Graduate School that the Master's diplomas be passed out as the students walk across the stage. Henneke then stated that Dean DePauw responded to his note, indicating that the Graduate School can pass out more diplomas behind the scenes than on stage, but she will take the matter up again with her staff to consider for future ceremonies. Mihalik explained that the process of clearing a Master's degree student is more involved than clearing a Bachelor's degree student. A suggestion was made to have a strict deadline set for turning in paperwork by the Master's degree students. Mihalik mentioned that the Graduate School has not received any complaints from the Master's students about receiving their diplomas after the ceremony. Henneke made known that he received a complaint from an alumnus who is very upset that Master's students are not receiving their diplomas during the ceremony. Mihalik asked to have any complaints that may be received in the future forwarded to him or Dean DePauw in the Graduate School.

**Request by Green Engineering Program graduates to wear green sashes**

Henneke informed the committee that the Green Engineering Program is an established concentration that students in the College of Engineering can pursue by taking specific courses. The Green Engineering Program graduates are requesting recognition of completing this program by wearing green sashes during Commencement as well as recognition in the program. Murray stated that if we recognize one group in the printed program we would have to recognize all special groups. After discussion, O'Rourke moved to maintain the existing policy that graduates can wear one accoutrement in addition to an honor sash during the University ceremony, and leave it to the discretion of each college to recognize its students in a manner it deems appropriate. Easterling seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

**Final Planning for Spring Commencement**

Price indicated that everything is in good shape, but he needs the number of students graduating in order to set up the correct number of chairs. Henneke confirmed that the

Honors Program graduates would be marching through the tunnel again and should arrive around 7:00 p.m.

Reilly indicated that the only special needs request received for the stage party is a cadet assistant escort for one of the award recipients; a ramp will not be needed.

O'Rourke stated that the Governor's press conference would take place in the press room which may conflict with the robing area. Beach stated that he would determine what rooms will be used for the Governor's press conference and the robing area after he speaks with the Governor's staff.

Henneke then mentioned a request from University Relations office to hand out to each graduate a book of Virginia Tech post cards. The original plan was to have Alumni Relations mail these out with other information going to the graduates, but the postcards were not ready by the deadline for the mailing. After considerable discussion of the pros and cons, the committee decided not to distribute the booklets at the University ceremony and that University Relations will have to determine how to distribute the booklets.

Price asked if a teleprompter is needed for the Governor. O'Rourke stated that as soon as she found out, she would let everyone know. Beach indicated that at the last ceremony a teleprompter was used it was difficult to set up. He then suggested setting up the teleprompter on Thursday night to make sure that it will work properly.

Flinchum informed the committee that the Police Department received information that some groups may protest the University's policy on banning firearms on campus during the ceremony. Flinchum indicated that there will be state police on the field because of the Governor, and they are aware of the situation. He also indicated that officers will be in the stands in case there are any disturbances.

Reilly questioned whether there will be any additional special needs parking at the stadium. McCoy indicated there will be additional parking set up aside at the stadium for special needs.

Easterling informed the committee that the Faculty Senate president has requested to address the graduates at the University ceremony to offer congratulations on behalf of the faculty. Bagai stated that he strongly supports the request. Easterling then moved that the Faculty Senate president address the graduates during the University ceremony on behalf of the faculty. O'Rourke seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

With no other business, O'Rourke moved to adjourn at 12:50 p.m.