

**University Commencement Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, October 5, 2016**  
**12:15 p.m.**  
**President's Board Room, 210 Burruss Hall**

**Present:** Dan Taylor (chair), Janice Austin, Katie Wells for Candi Clemenz, Jay Crone, Rami Dalloul, Deborah Dickerson, Patrick Finn, Rebecca Funk, Liselle Joseph, Kelly McCann, Kim O'Rourke, Chris Saunders, Michael Stowe, Martha Sullivan, Pengtao Yue, Diane Zahm

**Absent:** Andrew Ellis, PJ Johnston, Lance Jones, Steve Sheetz, Benjamin Tracy, Anthony Watson (with notice)

**Guests:** Jonathan Caldwell, Bo Frazier, Tom Gallemore, Margie Murray, April Myers, Pam Vickers, Laura Wedin

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

**Announcement of Approval of May 4, 2016, minutes**

Taylor announced that the minutes of May 4, 2016, have been voted on and approved electronically.

**Logistics Update**

Taylor announced that the lineup for the students and faculty for the spring ceremony will now be located in the track parking lot instead of the south end zone lot. The south end zone lot will be made available for ADA and other parking. Beamer Way will be completely closed off.

**Proposal to Replace Spring Band Tour with a Concert**

Taylor informed the committee that there is less than twenty-four hours between final exams and the Commencement ceremonies which will make it difficult for the band to go to various high schools and perform. Jonathan Caldwell, conductor of the Virginia Tech Wind Ensemble, requested to have a concert in the Moss Arts Center instead of going on the band tour as in the past. The concert will be less expensive than the tour, local schools will be invited, and some Commencement guests will be able to attend. Caldwell has already confirmed that the Moss Arts Center is available for this concert. Kim O'Rourke moved that instead of having a band tour, there will be a free concert presented in the Moss Arts Center on Thursday night. Diane Zahm seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

**Recap of Spring Ceremonies**

Laura Wedin indicated that Matt Winston, Senior Associate Vice President for Alumni Relations, has requested that the Alma Mater be performed at the Graduate School ceremony as it is at the University ceremony. It was indicated that the Graduate School ceremony is already a long ceremony and adding an additional song will just make it longer. Taylor then stated that a request was made to also include remarks from the Alumni Association at the Graduate School ceremony. Janice Austin stated that Dean DePauw, Vice President and Dean of Graduate Education, is going to bring this to the Graduate Student Assembly to see if they feel they have a connection to having the Alma Mater sung at their ceremony. Kelly McCann indicated that the purpose of having the Alma Mater sung and remarks from the Alumni Association during the Graduate School ceremony is to build connections between the Alumni Association and graduate students. O'Rourke stated that building a relationship between the graduate students and Alumni needs to begin long before graduation. O'Rourke suggested having it sung while the graduates are processing in. Austin indicated that Dean DePauw will look for what could be cut back in the ceremony script in order to add the Alma Mater.

Taylor indicated that there was old information posted on the Virginia Tech website (which guests found) that contained incorrect information. Michael Stowe indicated that he will need more details about what the information is and where the information was found so that University Relations can correct it. O'Rourke suggested posting Commencement information earlier on the VT Website in a prominent location so those searching for Commencement information can find it easily. Stowe asked that whenever anyone receives feedback regarding information on the website to send it to University Relations immediately so that it can be taken care of right away.

A request has been made to get adjustable podium for the stage due to the varying heights of the speakers. Taylor said that it is doable but costly. O'Rourke indicated concern for having adjustable podiums due to potential glitches with the raising and lowering of the podiums and the possible distractions it may cause while the podiums is being adjusted. A suggestion was made to have a step stool stored in the bottom of the podium to be used by those needing more height.

Taylor informed the committee that there were issues with guests bringing backpacks in to the venues, which is not permissible. Rhino has suggested there be a bag check area but there is a security concern with that. Tom Gallemore indicated that there is bag check being done for football games, and the VTPD has worked out how to make sure it is secure and safe. He feels certain the same process could be used at the University ceremony in the stadium.

Taylor indicated that there was an issue with the Master's candidates check in during the spring ceremonies. Austin stated that issue has been addressed.

The area downstairs in Cassell Coliseum, where the faculty and Ph.D. candidates line up, was very hot, and it seems the air conditioning was not working properly. McCann indicated that there was construction going on and that is probably the reason for the air conditioning not working properly. The gym, where the Master's candidates line up, is hot as well. Murray indicated that there is no access to water there. Water will need to be provided to the graduates during the spring Graduate School ceremony.

There was also a suggestion made to let graduates at both the University and Graduate School ceremonies sit down after they process in and then will be prompted to stand back up when the stage party processional begins.

Diane Zahm indicated that the ushers and marshals during the spring University ceremony do not need to have food provided. They will only need to have access to water or have a bottle of water provided to them that they can get at the orientation.

### **Planning for Fall ceremonies**

Michael Stowe indicated that live captioning can be done for Commencement ceremonies. The cost for live streaming is \$1500 per ceremony, and the additional cost for live captioning will be \$115 per hour.

Taylor indicated that there needs to be ADA seating provided for those lining up downstairs at Cassell Coliseum. There may have been an issue with the seating due to the construction last spring.

With no other business, O'Rourke moved to adjourn at 1:03 p.m.