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.  


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 (COSP), 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 COSP minutes. According to Hughes, although the 12/5/01 minutes of CAS were brought forward to COSP 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.