COMMENCEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, November 6, 2002
President’s Boardroom, 210 Burruss Hall – 12:15 p.m.

Present: Ed Hennake, Bill Stringer for Jerry Allen, Randy Billingsley, Bud Brown, Audrey Zink-Sharp for Greg Brown, Reba Crawford, John Beach for Bill Elvey, Jerry Gibson, Pat Goodrich, Grant Hill, Larry Hincker, Brad Klein, Vinod Lohani, Kim O’Rourke, Dixie Reaves, Katie McCoy for Nicole Reynolds, Sherry Schofield-Tomschin, Dean Stauffer, Dan Taylor

Guests: Susan Angle, Allen Miller, Margie Murray, Lyndell Price, Jennie Reilly

Absent: Theresa Cassino, Leon Geyer, Bill Green, Diane Zahm

Chairman Hennake called the meeting to order at 12:16 p.m.

Approval of Minutes for October 2, 2002 Meeting
Moved by Bud Brown, and seconded by Randy Billingsley, the minutes were approved as written.

Planning for Fall Commencement Ceremonies
Commencement brochures have been mailed, and the program is being proofed. With no further questions or discussion regarding the planning progress for fall commencement, the discussion moved to the next agenda item.

Northern Virginia Commencement Ceremony
Goodrich reported that Dean DePauw would like to see the Northern Virginia commencement ceremonies recognized in the programs beginning with the spring ceremony. Using the same program format, add a page with the schedule for the NOVA ceremony and list the students’ names. The request was noted and will be added.

Schedule for Spring Commencement Ceremonies
The first question addressed the reasoning behind this committee’s decision to discontinue the use of the Field House for spring commencement. The discussion began with the need to reduce the budget for commencement ceremonies. Although the savings for eliminating the use of this venue is approximately $22,000, there is another reason that this committee decided it would be best to discontinue its use. Hennake restated that the posted occupancy of the Field House is limited to 3600 guests. Beach indicated that the floor was set for 3400 guests, plus graduates and staff. Recently those numbers had been exceeded beyond capacity, violating the fire code, causing this venue to be unsafe for the College of Human Sciences and Education ceremony. The only other site large enough for this college ceremony would be Cassell Coliseum unless the event was held outdoors. With no rain-site location, that is not a viable option.
If the university were to hold the usual University Ceremony at 9 a.m. (in cases of inclement weather, this ceremony would be in the Coliseum and not Lane Stadium) in the spring, this would delay the first college to hold its ceremony at 11 a.m., with another following at 1:30 p.m., and the third college beginning at 4 p.m., respectively. At present, no college wishes to begin their ceremony in that late of a time slot.

It was determined that this committee should make a recommendation regarding the schedule for spring commencement as soon as possible to get the information out to the public, and that the final recommendation would be made at the December 4 meeting and forwarded to the president for his consideration.

The discussion began.

- The first suggestion was to move the main ceremony to 8 a.m. on Saturday and have the three colleges follow, i.e. the College of Engineering, College of Human Sciences and Education, and the Pamplin College of Business. The college of engineering representative voted for moving the university ceremony to Friday afternoon, opposing the late Saturday afternoon start time for any college. It was reported that in discussions with the Registrar’s Office that if a college moved their ceremony to Friday, that college would not be able to provide graduates with diplomas. The Registrar’s Office could not have them ready that early.
- Hill, the 2003 class president, preferred that the university ceremony be moved to Friday instead of beginning the ceremony at 8 a.m. on Saturday morning. He thought it would be difficult for parents to be here that early. Hincker noted that parents would want to be at their child’s graduation whether it is held on Friday or Saturday. Hill also felt that if a college ceremony moved to Friday, thus causing the decision that no student receives a diploma in the spring, he would be okay with that decision. Beach indicated that although the earlier time for the main ceremony would press the Physical Plant, it could be done at an earlier time. Beach did suggest that one of the college ceremonies could remain in Lane Stadium after the main ceremony, but again, there would be no rain site.
- There has been quite a lot of opposition to discontinuing the handing out of diplomas in the spring, and the Commission on Faculty Affairs is discussing the expense of preparing diplomas in the spring versus mailing them. At present, the Registrar believes that the expense for mailing would be greater in the long run than the extra effort required by their office in the spring to prepare them for college ceremonies.
- One member of the committee asked what exactly is handed out at the fall ceremony to each student rather than their diploma. The Alumni Association provides a memento or two, information is provided regarding the photographer and the mailing of diplomas, and either the president or the dean of the graduate school includes a letter. Basically, preparing these envelopes for both fall and spring would increase the expenses of the Alumni Association.
- Klein asked how the diplomas are prepared in the Registrar’s Office. Are they done in alphabetical order by college? If so, could we let them know each year which college ceremony if any would be held on Friday, so that those diplomas could be made ready. It was stated again that the Registrar’s Office indicated that none could be ready on Friday. Someone noted that most graduates really want to have their diploma in hand. It was also suggested that every third year, one college would not receive diplomas. The college of engineering representative indicated at an earlier meeting they would agree to a Friday ceremony only if no one received a diploma.
The discussion reverted back to the use of the Field House. Couldn't additional doors be added to the Field House to increase egress required by the Fire Marshal? Beach indicated that it would be quite expensive to add doors, but also noted that a lingering issue is the use of the port-o-floor, which must be replaced after a certain length of time. The first floor was purchased jointly by Athletics and the President's Office a few years back, but has become increasingly damaged by continued use. The replacement cost would eventually become an issue. There were also excessive heat and lack of seating complaints in prior years.

It was asked why the College of Human Resources was moved from War Memorial, and the answer was that once the college merged with Education, the venue became too small. Tent rental was suggested as an option, but the cost of tent rental of that size could be anywhere from $10 to $25 thousand dollars, thus eliminating the cost savings originally intended.

- It was suggested that the college of engineering could split its ceremonies the way the college of arts and sciences does. The engineering representative indicated that the college would not want to split its ceremonies. Because of the many locations currently used by arts and sciences, there would not be enough locations around campus to house these ceremonies.
- McKee indicated that the logical thing to do would be to move the university ceremony to Friday. This would eliminate the need for these three colleges to find another venue other than Cassell Coliseum.
- It was noted that the weather could still be an issue on a Friday afternoon or early evening time, but that Cassell Coliseum would be available as a rain site. It was suggested that the committee ask for more input from the SGA and other similar organizations to gauge their thoughts on this matter.
- It was also noted that if the ceremony moves to Friday, because of traffic and parking demands, the university would need to close early to supply the demand.
- It was stated that the university ceremony for students and parents is optional. The actual college ceremony is where the student receives his or her diploma. The main ceremony on Friday could be kind of a kick-off for the remaining ceremonies, with the conferring of degrees by the president. It is best that the graduates have a positive experience. Hincker also indicated that we are limited on Saturday to a one-hour university ceremony, and that given more time, the ceremony could become more creative—it's been the same for 20-30 years.

The next part of the discussion revolved around the planning for moving the university ceremony to Friday. If this is done, other ceremonies could possibly be affected. For instance, the Graduate School Ceremony (normally held at 4:30 p.m.), the Corps of Cadets Graduation Ceremony (normally held at 3 p.m., and the College of Veterinary Medicine (normally held in the evening).

- It was mentioned that is would be an advantage to have the Graduate School hold its ceremony first, and then the graduates could process with the faculty at the university ceremony.
According to the representative from the Vet School, their ceremony is held in Squires and could be held at the same time as the Graduate School ceremony, or they could follow the Graduate School ceremony, with the university ceremony being held at twilight with a dinner break in between. Of course, this would leave the Corps Graduate Ceremony to place in a time slot.

Advantages to moving the university ceremony to Friday were reiterated: 1) the three colleges involved could begin their ceremonies in Cassell Coliseum earlier, 2) diplomas would be available for all colleges, 3) even the college of arts and sciences could begin its ceremonies earlier and have more campus venues available.

Hincker suggested that a subcommittee be appointed to discuss the details of the schedule for spring ceremonies. Brown moved that the committee recommend to the president that the university ceremony be moved to Friday with the details of the schedule being worked out at a later date. The motion was seconded by Reaves, and all approved with one abstention from Klein—until a schedule could be discussed.

Klein questioned whether or not the first college beginning early on Saturday would be able to get its diplomas in time. It was stated that the colleges usually pick up their diplomas quite early, and that this should not be a problem.

Henneke appointed the following members to discuss the schedule for spring commencement: Henneke, Beach, Price, Snyder, O’Rourke, Reaves, Taylor, Stringer, Klein, DePauw or Avery, Hill, and Nicole Reynolds.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:10 p.m.