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 3rd 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