University Commencement Committee Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, March 14, 2007  
12:15 p.m.  
President’s Board Room, 210 Burruss Hall

Present: Ed Henneke, Bill Stringer for Jerry Allen, Sharnnia Artis, Bud Brown, Ellington Graves, Mark Owczarski for Larry Hincker, Kathy Hosig, Jean Kampe, Brad Klein, Brian Mihalik, Kim O'Rourke

Absent: Michelle Czamanske, Bill Green, Jerry Niles, Matt O'Leary, Lyndell Price, Dixie Reaves, Susanna Rinehart, Dean Stauffer, Dan Taylor, Linda Tegarden, James Tyger for Russell Davis

Guests: Patrick Casey, April Myers, Eric Wininger

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

Approval of Minutes
Mihalik moved that the minutes for the February 7, 2007, meeting be approved. With a second from Stringer, the minutes were approved unanimously.

Planning for Spring Commencement
Kampe questioned when the request for ushers and marshals will be distributed to the colleges. Henneke confirmed that Dan Taylor, Director of Ushers, and Dixie Reaves, Director of Processions, are working on the memo, and the information will be sent out soon.

Casey indicated that they are finalizing who the Commencement singer will be, and there is a possibility it will not be the same singer from the fall ceremonies.

Henneke informed the committee that the funding for the Wind Symphony tour has been approved by the EVP's office.

Stringer indicated the Color Guard is all set for the two ceremonies in Blacksburg and the Northern Virginia ceremony.

O'Rourke indicated that a speaker has been confirmed for the university ceremony, but the university does not have permission to release the name at this time. Owczarski informed the committee that the Graduate School speaker has also been confirmed. A speaker has not been confirmed for the Northern Virginia ceremony.

At the February 7, 2007, meeting it was suggested that the Graduate Ceremony have the candidates walk across the stage before the president confers degrees. Mihalik indicated that Dean DePauw has no problem with that change, and the President’s Office will need to update the script to incorporate the change.

It was then suggested that the doors on both sides of Cassell Coliseum remain open during each ceremony on Saturday, May 12, 2007, in order to keep air flowing. Henneke informed the committee that the reason the doors are closed on the west side of the coliseum during the first two ceremonies is to prevent guests from entering for
those ceremonies before the guests of the previous ceremony are able to leave. Mihalik asked if there is a ventilation system in the roof of the coliseum. Henneke indicated that there are fans in the ceiling, but sometimes the fans are noisy. Henneke will check with the physical plant to see if the fans can be turned on for the Saturday ceremonies. The group that handles the sound system may be able to overcome the sound of the fans also. Graves suggested having an usher posted outside in order to keep people from entering through certain doors. Henneke indicated that posting an usher outside to prevent guests from entering an open door will not work because once two or three people decide to use those doors, others will follow.

Quality of Virginia Tech Diplomas
Henneke received a copy of a letter addressed to Dean DePauw. The letter was written by a Ph.D. December 2006. The graduate is concerned with the difference in quality between the master’s diploma he received three or four years ago and the Ph.D. diploma he recently received. His master’s diploma measures 15 ½” x 13 ½” and his Ph.D. diploma measures 12” x 9”. The graduate also indicated that the print on the diploma was not produced with raised print and the university name and seal are not fully embossed. It was then determined that currently master’s diplomas are also the smaller size. The Graduate School diploma sizes were changed four years ago in order to fit the diploma covers that are given out by the Graduate School. The bachelor’s diplomas are still 15 ½” x 13 ½” in size. In the 1970’s, the Commencement Committee set the size of all the diplomas given out by the University to be 15 ½” x 13 ½”. Henneke then indicated that all diplomas with a particular degree must be the same size because the diploma is an official legal document. The re-sizing of the graduate degree diplomas is an issue that should have been brought to the Commencement Committee before being implemented. Artis indicated that when she received her master’s diploma she was disappointed that it was smaller than her bachelor’s diploma. Graves suggested that graduates would prefer a diploma that they can frame and display. A suggestion was made to decrease the size of the bachelor’s diplomas. It was mentioned that the undergraduates would not be pleased with a decrease in the size of the bachelor’s diplomas. Mihalik indicated that the Graduate School will correct any errors with the printing and embossing. Artis recommended that all three diplomas be uniform by keeping them the same size. Owczarski suggested that the committee research the options that are available for cover and diploma sizes. Henneke suggested that the members of committee do more background investigation, and the issue will be brought to the attention of the committee at the next meeting.

With no other business, Brown moved to adjourn at 12:23 p.m.