University Commencement Committee Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, April 4, 2007  
12:15 p.m.  
President’s Board Room, 210 Burruss Hall

Present: Ed Henneke, Bill Stringer for Gen. Allen, Bud Brown, Ellington Graves, Larry Hincker, Kathy Hosig, Jean Kampe, Brian Mihalik, Kim O’Rourke, Lyndell Price, Dean Stauffer, Dan Taylor

Absent: Sharnnia Artis, Michelle Czamanske, Bill Green, Brad Klein, Jerry Niles, Matt O’Leary, Dixie Reaves, Susanna Rinehart, Linda Tegarden, James Tyger

Guests: Patrick Casey, Margie Murray, April Myers, Jacqueline Nottingham, Eric Wininger

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

Approval of Minutes
Graves moved that the minutes for the March 14, 2007, meeting be approved. With a second from Mihalik, the minutes were approved unanimously.

Continuation of Discussion on Diploma Sizes
Mihalik gave out data on diplomas sizes of ACC schools and Select SCHEV-approved 2007 peers of Virginia Tech. The majority of the ACC schools give one size diploma for all degrees, and the most common sizes of diploma are 8 ½” x 11” or 11” x 14”.

Ohio State University, University of Michigan, and UC-Berkeley all give out 8 ½” x 11” diplomas. Only Virginia Tech gives out an odd size diploma of 13 ½” x 15 ½”. This odd size makes it difficult for students to find inexpensive off-the-shelf frames. It is also difficult for international students to go home and find frames to fit the odd size diploma. Other schools offer to order larger diplomas for an additional cost to the students.

Henneke informed the committee that the registrar’s office stated that all diplomas for a particular degree must be the same size because they are official legal documents.

Mihalik indicated that the Graduate School supports one size diploma for all degrees, but the size should be a standard size. Henneke informed the committee that the cost of printing the diplomas is approximately $2.00 each and the difference between the 13 ½” x 15 ½” and the 9” x 12” is very minimal. Hosig questioned if changing the size of the Graduate School diploma would create a problem getting the diploma covers shipped in time for the ceremony. Mihalik indicated that if a standard size is used, there should not be a problem getting them by Commencement.

Nottingham indicated that the Graduate School just reordered the diploma covers and the cost is $3.75 each. Graves stated that students like the larger diploma and if the size is changed it should be a standard size of 11” x 14” or 14” x 17”.

Hincker stated that there are two issues at hand. The first issue is whether or not all diplomas should be the same size. The second issue is whether the size of the diplomas should be a standard size. Henneke then indicated that he is not sure as to why the size of 13 ½” x 15 ½” was selected, but it was decided by the Commencement Committee in the mid 1970’s. Henneke then stated that a change to the Ph. D. diploma was made without the committee’s input. The Commencement Committee is charged with all aspects of Commencement for both ceremonies. Mihalik indicated that the since the Alumni Association helps with the cost of the diploma covers
they should be consulted before any changes are made. O’Rourke then suggested that it seems logical to make the diplomas a consistent standard size in the vicinity of 13 ½” x 15 ½”. Kampe noted that a change in diploma size might necessitate a change in design. Hincker offered to do some research on the different sizes and bring this information to the next meeting.

**Planning for Spring Commencement**

Henneke informed the committee that the Spring Commencement rehearsal will be on Friday, May 11, 2007, at 8:00 a.m. There will also be a walkthrough scheduled on the Thursday, May 10.

It was determined that the suites, the west lounge, and the pressroom in the South End Zone have all been reserved for the ceremony on May 11. The President’s Box would be a suitable location, but there is an issue getting the stage party from the President’s Box to the South End Zone.

Mihalik asked if it is possible to turn the exhaust fans in the coliseum on between ceremonies on Saturday, May 12. Price indicated that the exhaust fans can be turned on between ceremonies and permission has been given to open the doors in the coliseum in order to have better airflow.

There was a request from the Department of Mathematics to have the College of Engineering’s ceremony changed to a different time because several students are graduating from both and can only attend one ceremony. Henneke mentioned that each year the College of Engineering and the Pamplin College of Business alternate between an 8:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. start time. It may be possible to change the start time for the Department of Mathematics’ ceremony but not the College of Engineering. Murray indicated that lots of students get dual degrees each year and have to choose what ceremony they want to attend.

Casey announced that Katie Campbell Deglans has been selected as the singer for both ceremonies.

It was announced that retired General John Philip Abizaid will deliver the University Commencement address and Dr. Alberto Bustani, president of Monterrey Region of the Instituto Tecnologico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey in Mexico, will deliver the Graduate School address. Mihalik asked if there are any concerns about demonstrations because of the General being the keynote speaker. Everyone is aware of possible protests, and as long as it doesn’t get out of hand they will be allowed to protest. O’Rourke indicated that only two students have voiced their concerns and she invited them to come in and discuss their concerns. One student came in and O’Rourke explained to the student that the selection was based on General Abizaid’s unique leadership position. The student indicated that he will be attending the ceremony. The student also questioned if the senior class can offer suggestions of possible speakers. O’Rourke indicated that as juniors they could propose names to be considered.

[Note: There was no protest at the ceremony, and the General’s speech was well received by the audience.]

With no other business, Brown moved to adjourn at 12:50 p.m.