Commencement Committee Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, April 5, 2006  
12:15 p.m.  
President’s Boardroom, 210 Burruss Hall

Present: Ed Henneke, Bill Stringer for Jerry Allen, Deborah Cook, Ellington Graves, Larry Hincker, Jean Kampe, Navin Manjooran, Jerry Niles, Kim O’Rourke, Dixie Reaves, Dean Stauffer, Dan Taylor

Absent: Sumeet Bagai, Bud Brown, Russell Davis, Sam Easterling, Jerry Gibson, Bill Green, Brian James, Brad Klein, Brian Mihalik, Lyndell Price

Guests: John Beach, Angela Marshall, Richard McCoy, Margie Murray, April Myers, Jennie Reilly, Eric Wininger

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

Approval of Minutes
Reaves moved that the minutes for the March 1, 2006, meeting be approved as written. With a second from Graves, the minutes were approved unanimously.

Planning for Spring Commencement
Henneke informed the committee that the President’s box will not be used for the ceremony this year because of the construction, and with the Governor as the Commencement speaker we would not want to expose him to the construction area. Henneke then indicated that it may be worthwhile to use the President’s box for future ceremonies because there is ample room to have the buffet dinner and for the stage party to robe. Once the dinner is over, the guests can remain in the President’s box and watch the ceremony from there. Then the problem becomes moving the stage party from the President’s box to the field. Henneke questioned how to get from the elevator onto the field. O’Rourke was told that one elevator goes all the way down onto the field. Beach indicated that since the elevator is a freight elevator there may be certain regulations that will not allow people to be transported in it. Alternatively, the stage party could ride the elevator down to the concourse level, but then would have to be escorted through the crowd out to the field. Henneke suggested that the committee discuss this at a later date once there is more information available.

Henneke then stated that the Governor Tim Kaine has confirmed that he will be the University speaker for the Spring ceremony. He announced that Gaston Caperton, President of The College Board and former Governor of West Virginia will be the Graduate School Commencement speaker.

Henneke then mentioned that once again the Graduate School has decided that the master’s diplomas will not be handed to the graduates on the stage, but instead the graduates can pick up their diplomas at the Graduate Life Center after the ceremony until 6:30 p.m. This would be the second or third year that this process has been used. Henneke questioned why the master’s diplomas cannot be given out when the undergraduate and the PhD students receive their diplomas on stage. Before the new process was implemented, all of the graduates received their diplomas on stage. Taylor indicated that part of the reason for this is some of the master’s degree candidates that walk are not yet eligible to receive their diploma. Reaves suggested giving just the
Henneke stated that he thought the biggest problem was the amount of time it took to get the diplomas ready. He then suggested setting a deadline for students to confirm their plans to participate in the ceremony. That way the diplomas for those that confirm their participation can be ready for the ceremony. Henneke indicated that a major concern is getting the diplomas in order on the stage because not all of the students that are eligible to graduate actually participate in the Commencement ceremony. Reaves also mentioned that the line up is by discipline and if diplomas are handed out at the ceremony, the line up would have to be alphabetical.

A motion was made to have the Commencement Committee recommend strongly to the Dean of the Graduate School that diplomas be presented to master's degree candidates during the spring Graduate School ceremony beginning as soon as possible and preferably with the spring 2006 ceremony. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Henneke then gave background information on the Senior Challenge, which is a program that was established approximately five to ten years ago in which all the graduating seniors are asked to donate to the Virginia Tech Foundation. The challenge is for each class to do better than the previous class. Three years ago, the Commencement Committee was approached with the concept of having the check presented to the president on behalf of the Senior Challenge at the University Commencement ceremony. The check was presented during Commencement for two years but was not presented last year. O’Rourke indicated that a request has been made to present the check at this year’s Commencement ceremony. Hincker moved to allow the Senior Challenge check to be presented during the University Commencement ceremony and O’Rourke seconded the motion. Hincker recommended allowing the check to be presented to Dr. Steger during the Commencement ceremony because this would be a good start to developing private philanthropy. O’Rourke informed the committee that this year the president has agreed to match the Senior Challenge gift. Kampe questioned if the audience was told any information on what the Senior Challenge is. O’Rourke indicated that a brief description is given as to why the check is being presented. After some discussion, the motion passed unanimously. O’Rourke then questioned if the committee would vote on the Senior Challenge presentation every year or if this would be approved for all future ceremonies. Henneke indicated that the motion will include all future ceremonies.

Reilly informed the committee that a request was received from the Blacksburg Transit to change the drop off location for guests with special parking needs. McCoy indicated that the BT requested changing the drop off location on Spring Road between Cassell Coliseum and Lane Stadium. The committee decided to keep the same drop off location in the South End Zone as in previous years.

McCoy indicated that special needs parking will be reserved in the half of the coliseum lot located on Spring Road.

With no other business, Graves moved to adjourn at 12:45 p.m.