Present: Ed Henneke, Bill Stringer for Jerry Allen, Sharnnia Artis, Bud Brown, Michelle Czamanske, Ellington Graves, Larry Hincker, Jean Kampe, Brian Mihalik, Jerry Niles, Kim O'Rourke, Lyndell Price, Dixie Reaves, Audrey Zink-Sharp for Dean Stauffer, Dan Taylor

Absent: Bill Green, Kathy Hosig, Brad Klein, Matt O'Leary, Susanna Rinehart, Linda Tegarden, James Tyger

Guests: Capt. Albert, John Beach, Patrick Casey, Karen DePauw, Margie Murray, April Myers, Jacqueline Nottingham, Mark Owczarski, Jennie Reilly, Brianna Robinson, Eric Wininger

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

Approval of Minutes
Henneke informed the committee that the minutes from the April 4, 2007, meeting are not complete and will be sent out electronically for reading and approval within the next couple of weeks.

Increased Security for Ceremonies
Information is already posted on the website about the increased security at all Commencement ceremonies on Friday, May 11, and Saturday, May 12. The increased security measures will include searching every person, handbag, or package that comes into each venue. Even the graduates who will be processing will be asked to open their gowns before entering. At every ceremony there will be police officers present. There will be RMC staff at Lane Stadium, Cassell Coliseum, Burruss Auditorium, The Graduate Life Center, and Squires to assist with the security measures. Sites are going to be secured beforehand, but it should not disrupt the rehearsal on Friday morning at 8:00 a.m. Albert suggested that ushers arrive approximately two-and-a-half hours before the start of the ceremony in order to allow time for searches. Mihalik indicated that the ceremonies in Cassell may be delayed because of the enhanced security. The guests of the Engineering ceremony will be asked to exit on the east side of the coliseum while the Agriculture guests enter on the west side. Albert indicated that the families will also be searched.

The families of the deceased will be in room 207 of Cassell and will park in the tennis court parking lot. Henneke asked if the liaison for each family will be in the family room. DePauw indicated that the liaisons will be in the family room, and she has also asked for help for the families on the way into the coliseum. O'Rourke indicated that the families of the deceased will have identification cards that will allow them access to the Cassell Coliseum and the South End Zone. There are 250 of these cards being made. Henneke questioned if room 207 would be large enough to accommodate all of the families. DePauw indicated that there should be enough space. Taylor then suggested using the women's visiting locker room if necessary. Murray informed the committee that there will be a new robing room for the Graduate School stage party that is larger.
than the Monogram Room, and it is air conditioned. She will let everyone know the location once it is confirmed. Everyone at the Northern Virginia ceremony will be also be searched.

**Emergency Evacuation Plan**
There are plans that have been established in the past for Lane Stadium and Cassell Coliseum. If there is a need to evacuate one of these two venues, an announcement will be made from the public speaker system asking the audience to please rise and file out to the nearest exit. The plan will include the process to be used for wheelchairs. Taylor indicated that he will ask the ushers to assist with anyone in wheelchairs if they are in the same area. Albert indicated that all security personnel and those in charge will have the evacuation plan.

**Program Overview**
Niles expressed concern about capacity for the Communication and Political Science and International Studies ceremonies as well as concern that there may not be a sufficient amount of time between the two ceremonies. Old Dominion and the Studio Theatre were suggested as possible locations for overflow seating. Reilly indicated that the Studio Theatre is not very accessible. It was determined that Veterinary Medicine will have a reception in Old Dominion after their ceremony, but it should be over before it would be needed for any overflow seating. Henneke indicated that he would check into the availability of possible overflow locations.

DePauw indicated that the families of the deceased graduate students will receive the posthumous degrees while on stage, and the Ph.D. hoods will also be presented to the two families of Ph.D. students. DePauw stated that Professor Loganathan was the advisor for one of the deceased graduate students and someone will probably fill in for him. The class rings will be given to the families of the deceased graduate students by Tom Tillar before the ceremony. These families will be asked if they want to be seated prior to the ceremony or to process in just before the stage party. Reaves will need to know the number of seats needed for the families. Tissues and water will be provided to the families of the deceased in the family room as well as on the floor of the coliseum. Light refreshments will also be available in the family room.

O’Rourke informed the committee that during the University ceremony photographs of the deceased undergraduate students will be displayed on the Jumbo Tron while Tom Tillar reads the names of the deceased students. While all this is going on the President and the Provost will be walking down on to the field where the families are sitting and present them with the class rings. During the University ceremony, the deceased graduate students’ and faculty members’ names will also be read while their photographs are displayed on the Jumbo Tron.

Counselors will be available for all Commencement ceremonies, and Chris Flynn will be handling the scheduling for both Friday and Saturday ceremonies.

Taylor mentioned that there will probably be more faculty participation this year because deans are announcing that all faculty are expected to participate. There may be a need for overflow for the Graduate School ceremony. DePauw suggested putting the chairs on the floor closer together in order to accommodate the increase of participants.
O’Rourke stated that for the University ceremony, the families of the deceased will be meeting and dining in the East Lounge of the South End Zone, and the stage party will be meeting, dining, and robing in the West Lounge of the South End Zone. At 7:15 p.m. the elevators will be brought to the third floor to wait for the stage party to be transported to the bottom floor where they will line up in the same hallway that is always used. O’Rourke then mentioned that the families of the injured students and the families of the Virginia Tech Rescue Squad who are graduating are invited to the West Lounge for dinner. After dinner, the guests can be escorted to a suite. The family members of the deceased who are not going down on the field can stay in the East Lounge and view the ceremony.

The families of the deceased undergraduates will be escorted down onto the field at the same time the stage party goes down to line up. There will be someone there to escort them out onto the field.

Reilly indicated that Tom Gabbard suggested that people with mobility difficulties can use the area right outside of the President’s Box on the West Side in addition to the fourth floor of the South End Zone. They can gain access by taking the elevators in the south tower to the fourth floor. Taylor indicated that the information for the ushers and marshals will be sent out by Monday, May 7 and the information about the mobility seating can be added to that information.

**Offers of Music and Songs to be Played During Commencement**

There has been a tremendous outpouring of music that has been written in the past two weeks, and requests have been made to play these tributes during the Commencement ceremony. It was decided that the best thing to do is to play something classic in order to not upset anyone. It was suggested that these pieces of music be played during next year’s commemoration on April 16. It was decided that the Alma Mater will be played quietly while the deceased students’ photographs are being shown during the University ceremony.

**ACC Flags**

Hincker informed the committee that there was an offer to have flags of the other ACC schools carried onto the field as a symbol of solidarity. The committee agreed that Commencement is not an appropriate event for this.

**Media**

Hincker indicated that there will be at least thirty-five national news organizations at Commencement. There will be a feed to the media that will be a two camera set up controlled by Kevin Hicks. The media will not be allowed on the field, but they will be allowed in the stands. There will be guidelines about what the media can and cannot do. There will be Public Information Officers (PIOs) to guide the media at all ceremonies, and there will be no broadcast cameras. The Graduate School ceremony will still be broadcast locally as usual. CNN is going to carry the University ceremony live on Friday night. Owczarski indicated that all media will be required to sign in and receive credentials at Lane Stadium on Friday morning. All press will be required to have a Virginia Tech lanyard and a big orange credential in order to be easily identified. There will only be one photographer from the Roanoke Times, the Associated Press, and University Relations allowed on the field. These photographers will have to make all of their photographs available to everyone else. Albert suggested that those photographers allowed on the field have credentials that indicate they are allowed on the
field. The press box will be open to the print journalists, which will allow them access to sound feeds and the internet. There will be no media allowed on the floor of Cassell Coliseum at any time.

It was determined that the entire University ceremony as well as the Graduate School ceremony will be taped. Some of the families of the deceased students may want a copy of the videos.

Working staff of both the Graduate School and University ceremonies will need to display credentials at all times for security purposes.

Plan if University Ceremony has to be Cancelled
It was decided that the ceremony will take place as scheduled unless there is severe weather. There is the possibility of delaying the ceremony for thirty minutes, but if it is longer than thirty minutes the ceremony will be cancelled. There will be either umbrellas or ponchos provided for the stage party and the families of the deceased if needed.

It was decided to have one final meeting on Wednesday, May 9, 2007, at 12:15 p.m. in the President’s Board Room. This will be the last meeting for Dr. Henneke who has chaired the committee since the 1991-92 academic year.

With no other business, Brown moved to adjourn at 1:27 p.m.