University Commencement Committee Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, May 9, 2007  
12:15 p.m.  
President’s Board Room, 210 Burruss Hall

Present: Ed Henneke, Bill Stringer for Gen. Allen, Bud Brown, Russell Davis, Bill Green, Mark Owczarski and Randy Stith for Larry Hincker, Kathy Hosig, Jean Kampe, Marion Ehrich for Brad Klein, Brian Mihalik, Kim O’Rourke, Lyndell Price, Dixie Reaves, Susanna Rinehart, Dean Stauffer, Dan Taylor, Christopher Neck for Linda Tegarden

Absent: Sharnnia Artis, Michelle Czamanske, Ellington Graves, Jerry Niles, Matt O’Leary

Guests: Capt. Albert, John Beach, Patrick Casey, Debbie Day, Chris Flynn, Hunter Gresham, Angela Marshall, Margie Murray, April Myers, Jacqueline Nottingham, Jennie Reilly, Brianna Robinson, Eric Wininger

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

Security & Emergency Evacuation Procedures
Albert indicated that everything is in order. Everyone will be screened when they enter a venue with no exceptions. The Virginia Tech Police Department has a script if there is a need to evacuate. There will not be any public announcements made about the evacuation procedures unless necessary. Albert confirmed that there will be screening at the Northern Virginia ceremony as well. The graduates will be screened at the opening of the tunnel so they will have time to zip up their gowns before entering the field. The honor students will be screened at the entrance of the tunnel on the north side. Albert indicated that every entrance to the coliseum will be monitored.

Taylor questioned what gates will be open. Albert informed the committee that the only gate that will not be open will be gate eight. Gate two will be used for handicapped, stage party, staff working the game, or families of the deceased. All those going to the third floor of the South End Zone will have credentials. It was determined that credentials will be needed for those in food service. Murray then indicated that the club seats in the South End Zone will be roped off for guests of the East and West lounges of the South End Zone. Gate two and the surrounding gates will primarily be for those going to the third and second floors.

Murray indicated that there will be credentials for all of the counselors and the liaisons. The committee decided that counselors should be available at the ceremony, but they will need to blend into the background. Flynn indicated that Value Options will have six to eight counselors on hand. There will also be twelve other Virginia Tech counselors at the University ceremony and four to six at the Graduate School ceremony. There will also be approximately four counselors at the bigger venues on Saturday and two counselors at the smaller venues. Cook Counseling Center will be open just in case someone needs more intense counseling. Mihalik questioned if counselors will be at the Northern Virginia ceremony. Flynn will contact those in Northern Virginia to see if there is a need for counselors at that ceremony. Reilly indicated that counselors can be stationed at the first aid stations. Flynn suggested having walkie-talkies in order to communicate counseling needs during the ceremony.
Media
Owczarski indicated that there will be a message going out to the entire university community acknowledging the fact that will be a very large media presence on campus starting Thursday through Saturday. The message will be a very positive tone thanking the community for its dignity and proper responses about April 16 and asking the community to do it again. The credentialing process will begin on Thursday morning at the Holtzman Center. All reporters will be asked to wear media credentials given to them by Virginia Tech. Owczarski informed the committee that there will be approximately 500 media people and approximately 100 to 200 media outlets. There will be press seating and press sections in all the Cassell Coliseum and Lane Stadium events. There will be various restrictions that the media will be asked to comply with. Priority will be given to the families of the deceased, guests, and graduates as an event of celebration first, and the needs of the media will be second.

There will be a media event at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday with General Abizaid in a location that will be announced at a later time. It was determined that there will be a large presence of media at the Graduate School ceremony as well.

Broadcast media coverage is being provided by Athletic Communications that will be available on satellite, which will eliminate some of the need to have broadcast cameras.

Still photography has also been coordinated through the Roanoke Times on Friday for both Cassell Coliseum and Lane Stadium so there will be fewer press photographers. There will be one photographer on the floor of the coliseum and one on the field of the stadium. There will be no tripods allowed in the coliseum, but still cameras and broadcast cameras will be allowed as long as they do not block any guests.

Both ceremonies will be videotaped. O'Rourke indicated that there may be requests for copies of these videos. Henneke mentioned that Chappell Graduation Images will be on the floor of the coliseum taking photos as the graduates cross the stage.

Final Planning for Ceremonies
Henneke asked if there are a sufficient number of ushers and marshals. Taylor indicated that the number we have can work.

Murray indicated that approximately 500 parking passes have been given out for Friday and Saturday for the Cassell and Lane parking lots.

Two families of the deceased undergraduates will be processing in with the honors students. They will be seated with the other families unless there is not enough room, in which case, they will be seated on the front row of the honors section. The liaisons will be with each family and will introduce the family as they are receiving the class ring.

The undergraduate student representative to the Board of Visitors will be marching in with the honors students, and he will also sit on the stage. It was determined that he will stay in the march to the south side stands, and someone will be there to escort him to where the stage party lines up.

Henneke informed the committee that he received an email questioning if room 207 in Cassell is large enough for the families of the deceased graduate students. There will
be approximately forty family members attending the Graduate School ceremony. Day indicated that she, Monika Gibson, and Jacqueline Nottingham will be going to Cassell to determine if 207 will work.

It was determined that 213 Merryman (Auditorium) will be the robing room for the Graduate School stage party. Murray confirmed that there is an appropriate hallway to tape the name-cards to the floor.

There will be a buffet dinner after the Graduate School and before the University ceremonies in the West Club Lounge of the South End Zone arranged by the President’s office. The stage party will be robing in the West Club Lounge and the guests of the stage party will be seated in a reserved suite in the South End Zone. The elevators will be stopped on the third floor at approximately 7:00 p.m., to take the families of the deceased down to be escorted onto the field. Any family member who decides to sit on the field after 7:00 p.m. may do so by being escorted to their seats along the East sideline. At approximately 7:15 p.m. the elevators will be stopped at the third floor to take the stage party down to line up in the hallway next to Beamer’s Pressroom.

O’Rourke informed the committee that each photograph of the deceased will be shown on the Jumbo Tron for five seconds. It was also determined that the Alma Mater should continue to play until the President and the Provost return to the stage.

The University ceremony will only be cancelled if there is life threatening weather. There will be ponchos and/or umbrellas available for the stage party and the families sitting on the field.

The Graduate School ceremony speaker may sit on stage at the University ceremony. Dean DePauw will determine where he will be sitting during the University ceremony.

Dan Taylor presented a gift to Dr. Henneke on behalf of the Commencement Committee because this is his last Commencement Committee meeting. Dr. Henneke received a standing ovation.

With no other business, Brown moved to adjourn at 1:20 p.m.