

MINUTES
UNIVERSITY COMMENCEMENT COMMITTEE
October 5, 1994

Members present: E. Henneke, C. Nickerson, L. Hincker, S. Musser, D. Ludwig, D. Taylor, M. Johnson, D. deWolf, Nancy Jack for D. Eversole, W. Butke, D. Drapeau, R. Smith, J. Tlou, A. Zink, B. Brown, L. Akers, S. Milliken.

Resource persons present: C. Agnew, J. Beach, C. Gasper, D. McKee, C. Morton, V. Reilly, P. White, L. Worley

The meeting was called to order at 12:05 p.m. by Ed Henneke, Committee Chair. Meeting was held in the President's Boardroom, Burruss Hall.

Since this was the first meeting held since new committee appointments for 1994-95, individuals attending the meeting introduced themselves and gave their affiliation with the committee.

Ed Henneke read a letter from President Torgersen expressing appreciation to the committee for a successful Spring Commencement Ceremony. He also read a letter commending John Beach for his outstanding efforts, especially in dealing with the teleprompter for the Governor's portion of the program.

The following agenda items were discussed:

1. Debriefing on the Spring Commencement Ceremony (May 14, 1994)
 - a. Sign language interpreter - Ed Henneke. By putting the interpreter on the west side of the stage, the bright morning sun was in the eyes of the individuals needing assistance, making it nearly impossible for them to see/follow the signing. The location of the interpreter and those needing assistance will need to be looked at closely for Spring 1995.
 - b. Usher comments - Dan Taylor. Ushers thought they were asked to arrive at the stadium too early. But concern over their getting stuck in traffic and not getting to the stadium in time to assist families reaffirmed the need for an early arrival.

Distribution and quantity of programs at the stadium were also discussed. Carolyn Agnew presented the idea of going with a smaller program, 25,000 copies, on less expensive paper for the University Ceremony only. This program would not include the names of the students. A program listing the names of the students would be printed for distribution at college/department ceremonies. Ruth Smith, College of Business representative, indicated that it would be difficult to hand out two programs to the large crowd attending their college ceremony, i.e., the program for the college ceremony and the program with students' names. Further discussion will continue at future meetings.

c. Cannon blast to punctuate awarding of degrees - Ed Henneke. Charles Goodsell contacted Henneke about discharging the cannon after degrees are conferred for each college. After some good natured discussion, the committee voted unanimously to not include the cannon in the University Commencement Ceremony.

d. Spring commencement dates - Carole Nickerson. Virginia Tech and Radford University alternate weekends for Spring Commencement. Martha Johnson mentioned that she served on the subcommittee to schedule the dates for the universities' ceremonies so they would not fall on the same weekend. The committee needs to find out how many years these dates are set and what needs to be done to continue the coordination of this effort. The date of commencement impacts the starting date of classes.

e. Report on pre-commencement tour of University Wind Symphony - Dave McKee. Dave McKee expressed his appreciation for the support of the committee and the administration to make the tour possible. He pointed out that for some rural areas like Pittsylvania and Henry counties where the group performed, it is the only contact people have with Virginia Tech. The tour received a very positive response at all locations visited. One aspect of good PR is that prospective students are shown that they can participate in the band and continue their studies in any area of interest. The group also performed at Dan River and Magna Vista high schools.

2. Preliminary Report on Commencement Space Survey - Carole Nickerson.

The Commencement Space Subcommittee has met twice. Its immediate goal is to solve short-term problems in regard to department/college space needs for Spring 1995. The subcommittee is not looking at the issuance of tickets to solve these problems even though some departments have indicated that they would use this option if needed. The departments who decide to issue tickets will handle their own PR, distribution, etc.

From the discussion of space needs, other issues have evolved that the subcommittee feels need to be addressed. They are:

a. Equity issues - costs and charges. The subcommittee will initiate another survey to determine how much commencement actually costs the colleges/departments. This will allow the committee to see how much of an impact the reception allocations have on these expenses, i.e., speaker honorariums, food costs, room rental, etc. It is very important to provide a memorable day for parents/guests.

b. Issuance of tickets. This issue will be looked at later.

c. Physical Plant. Need to look at the cost and manpower required throughout the day to support commencement activities.

- d. Ceremonies or receptions - which takes priority for available space?

Discussed the lodging situation for Spring 1995. Word is that Roanoke is booking up fast with no local accommodations available. Laura Worley reported that 2,000 people took advantage of housing in dorms in Spring 1994. Calls are already being received for information on the availability of dorm rooms for '95.

3. Fall Commencement (December 17, 1994) - Carole Nickerson.

- a. Reception subsidy - An additional \$9,000 has been allocated to help defray the cost of college/department receptions. A letter has been sent to the colleges requesting their reaction to receiving funds to support a function honoring their Fall graduates. The allotment per student will be \$5. Ed Henneke indicated that the committee needs to express appreciation to Laurie Martinson and Minnis Ridenour for supporting this increase.

- b. Speaker - Dr. Torgersen supports the idea of inviting a distinguished member of the Virginia Tech faculty to serve as the speaker at Fall Commencement. A letter from Dr. Torgersen has gone forward to an individual suggested by a student group led by Shannon Milliken, 1995 Class President. The GSA representative also polled graduate students who supported this idea. The speaker will receive a \$1,000 honorarium.

- c. Announcements - Carolyn Agnew. Flyers announcing Fall Commencement have been distributed to student groups, deans, directors, and department heads to post around campus. Also, an ad in the Collegiate Times will appear the first Friday of each month through December. Invitations and brochures were mailed the last two weeks of September.

Carole Nickerson also reported that members of the Commission on Undergraduate Studies expressed concern over the length of the Fall Ceremony which is a little over two hours. Discussion centered on ways to cut this time. One suggestion was to move the Hooding Ceremony for doctoral candidates to Friday evening. Concern was expressed about taking the identity of research out of the ceremony since this is sometimes the only time research areas are recognized. Having a faculty member as the speaker should help cut back on time allowed for this portion of the program. Further discussion was delayed until the next meeting when the expected number of graduates can be better determined. If we have 1,000 graduates, there may be a serious problem with space for guests in the Coliseum.

Meeting was adjourned at 1:25 p.m. Next meeting scheduled November 2 in 400-D Burruss Hall.