

MINUTES

Commencement Committee

March 5, 2025

12:00 p.m.

Zoom

Present: Diane Zahm (presiding), Jodie Brinkman, Rachel Miles, Dixie Watts Dalton, Janice Austin, Jennifer Cleveland, Jennifer Thomas, Keith Thompson, Kim O'Rourke, Marlena McGlothlin Lester, Michelle Seref, Pascha Gerni, Stewart Scales, Vito Scarola

Absent with Notice:

Absent: Jeanette Biczal, Lance Jones, Monica Kimbrell, Princess Merritt, Kayla Moten, Michael Stowe, John Torget, Anthony Watson, James Weger, Aqab Zahoor

Guests: Ciji Good, Jessie Richards, Erin Hand, Annie McCallum, Brittany Schulz, Chris Bolling, Eryn Giegel, Ginny Wagg

Diane Zahm called the meeting to order at 12:02 p.m. A quorum was present.

1. Announcement of approval and posting of minutes of 12/4/24 meeting.

Diane Zahm noted that minutes from the Committee's previous meeting, 12/4/2024, were approved electronically and can be publicly accessed on the Governance Website: governance.vt.edu.

2. Spring Volunteer Timeline Review

Diane Zahm provided a review of volunteer information for Spring Commencement. A call for volunteers for the university ceremony will go out soon. Each college will be asked to provide 3 volunteers:

2 volunteers for the ceremony

1 volunteer for ADA (disability) assistance.

According to Janice Austin, the graduate ceremony will have a different process for recruiting volunteers this year. They will not need marshals from each college. Instead, volunteers will be recruited directly. However, they will still ask for one volunteer from each college to assist with ADA needs. The deadline to sign up for volunteers is May 1st.

3. FAQ Update – ADA Parking Passes

The FAQ page originally stated that SSD would issue handicap parking passes. This will not be the case.

SE had previously offered to print passes, but SSD will not be issuing them. SE is working to simplify the process but does not plan to change it.

Attendees who have a handicap hangtag issued by the DMV will still be able to park in handicap spaces.

Nikeshia Arthur is no longer the contact for SSD matters. For any related questions, please contact Christina Miller.

4. Commencement Speakers

Eryn Giegel provided an update on the current nominations process for student speakers. Nominations are ongoing, and final decisions will be made after spring break.

Diane Zahm shared that there have been discussions regarding the possibility of giving students a greater voice in the selection process for the spring commencement. The committee is open to receiving nominations, and these would be sent to student organizations early in the academic year.

Kim O'Rourke noted that traditionally, student recommendations are made in the fall. She suggested that it may be beneficial to extend this practice to the spring as well.

Diane Zahm emphasized that the more suggestions received, the better the selection process will be. She also highlighted that this is a valuable opportunity for students to have input into the commencement speaker selection.

The Commencement Keynote Speaker will be announced next week.

5. Spring Commencement Schedule

Ciji Good provided an overview of the spring commencement schedule, walking the committee through the key dates and events.

Saturday, May 10

- **9 a.m.** Virginia Tech Carillion School of Medicine in Roanoke

Wednesday, May 14

- **3-5 p.m.** Graduate School in Cassell Coliseum (For doctoral degrees and interdisciplinary masters' degrees, all their master's degree students will attend their college ceremony)
- **6-8 p.m.** Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine (MPH, MS, and bachelors of science in public health) in the Moss Arts Center

Thursday, May 15

- **8:30-10:30 a.m.** College of Architecture, Arts, and Design in Cassell Coliseum
- **Noon-2 p.m.** Pamplin College of Business Ceremony One in Lane Stadium
 - Accounting and Information Systems
 - Master of Accounting and Information Systems
 - Business Information Technology
 - Master of Science in Business Administration - Business Analytics
 - Master of Science in Business Administration - Global Business Analytics
 - Hospitality and Tourism Management
 - Master of Science in Business Administration – Hospitality and Tourism Management
 - Master of Business Administration

- **3:30-4:30 p.m.** College of Natural Resources and Environment in Burruss Hall
- **4-6 p.m.** Pamplin College of Business Ceremony Two in Lane Stadium
 - Finance, Insurance, and Business Law
 - Management
 - Marketing
 - Real Estate
- **7:30-9:30 p.m.** College of Agriculture and Life Sciences in Lane Stadium

Friday, May 16

- **8:30 a.m.** University Commencement in Lane Stadium
- **12:30-2:30 p.m.** College of Science Ceremony One in Lane Stadium
 - Biological Sciences
 - Chemistry
 - Economics
 - Microbiology
 - Nanoscience
 - Physics
 - Systems Biology
- **4:30-6:30 p.m.** College of Science Ceremony Two in Lane Stadium
 - Computational Modeling and Data Analytics
 - Geosciences
 - Neuroscience
 - Mathematics
 - Psychology
 - Statistics
- **7-9 p.m.** Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) Ceremony in the Moss Arts Center
- **7-9 p.m.** Corps of Cadets Graduation and Joint Commissioning Ceremony in Burruss Hall

Saturday, May 17

- **8-10 a.m.** College of Engineering Ceremony One in Cassell Coliseum
 - Electrical Engineering
 - Computer Engineering
 - Computer Science
- **8:30-9:30 a.m.** College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences Ceremony One in Burruss Hall
 - Department of Sociology
 - Department of English
 - School of Public and International Affairs
 - Department of Science, Technology, and Society
 - Department of Religion and Culture
- **10:30-11:30 a.m.** College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences Ceremony Two in Burruss Hall
 - School of Communication
 - Department of History
- **Noon-2 p.m.** College of Engineering Ceremony Two in Cassell Coliseum

- Materials Science and Engineering
- Chemical Engineering
- Civil Engineering
- Industrial and Systems Engineering
- Building Construction
- Construction Engineering and Management
- **12:30-1:30 p.m.** College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences Ceremony Three in Burruss Hall
 - Department of Apparel, Housing, and Resource Management
 - Department of Human Development and Family Science
 - School of Education
- **2:30-3:30 p.m.** College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences Ceremony Four in Burruss Hall
 - Department of Political Science
 - Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures
 - Department of Philosophy
 - Philosophy, Politics, and Economics Program
- **4-6 p.m.** College of Engineering Ceremony Three in Cassell Coliseum
 - Mining Engineering
 - Biological Systems Engineering
 - Biomedical Engineering
 - Aerospace and Ocean Engineering
 - Mechanical Engineering
- **7:30-9:30 p.m.** College of Engineering Ceremony Four in Cassell Coliseum
 - All College of Engineering Master's Degrees

Sunday, May 18

- **1 p.m.** Graduate School Commencement (Washington D.C. Metro Area)

6. Special Events Commencement Liaisons

Jessie Richards informed the committee that each college has been assigned an SE coordinator who will act as a liaison for commencement planning. Initial meetings will be scheduled by the SE coordinator through mid-March to kick off the planning process.

7. Other

Commencement Website Updates:

Ginny Wagg requested an update to the verbiage on the commencement website to clarify that the graduate school graduation is only for doctoral and interdisciplinary master's degrees.

Marlena McGlothlin Lester asked for clarification on the locations of the upcoming ceremonies:

- The VTC ceremony will take place at the Jefferson Center.
- The DC graduate school ceremonies will be held at the GMU Center for the Arts.

Annie McCallum made real-time updates to the website during the meeting to reflect these changes.

President of the Faculty Senate's Attendance at Ceremonies:

Rachel Miles requested clarification on which ceremonies the President of the Faculty Senate is expected to attend.

Diane Zahm clarified that the President's attendance is required at both the graduate and university ceremonies, but not at the individual college ceremonies. Additionally, Diane noted that in the past, the President of the Faculty Senate has traveled to DC for the graduate ceremony, as they are the one who carries the mace.

Ginny Wagg recalled that this had not been the case in recent years. After discussion, it was agreed that the decision on whether the President of the Faculty Senate (marshal) should attend the DC graduate ceremony, and the related transportation and logistics, would be left to Ginny Wagg and the graduate school planning committee in DC.

Emergency Management and Disruption Plans:

Chris Bolling from Emergency Management stated that their primary concerns will be about monitoring the weather for the ceremonies in Lane Stadium in the days leading up to the event and keeping track of any changing weather conditions on the day of the ceremonies.

Ciji Good mentioned that disruption plans are being developed to address any potential protests or other disruptions during the ceremonies.

8. Adjournment

There being no further business, Diane Zahm adjourned the meeting at 12:23 p.m.