



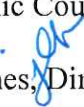
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS

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July 21, 2015

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Academic Council

FROM: Judy L. Barnes,  Director of University Events

SUBJECT: Annual Report of the Commencement Committee, 2014-2015

1. Membership

The Commencement Committee is a University-wide Standing Committee appointed by the President not reporting to the Academic Senate, The University of Texas at Dallas.

The voting members of the Commencement Committee included two members of the faculty, Kathryn Evans (School of Arts and Humanities) and Bruce Jacobs (School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences); and two student representatives including the President of Student Government, Brooke Knudtson, and Undergraduate Student, Garrett Staas (UG-ECS).

Non-voting members included: Director of University Events, Judy Barnes (Chair); Speaker of the Faculty, Tim Redman (Vice Chair); University Registrar and Director of Academic Records, Jennifer McDowell; Associate Vice President for Business Affairs, Rick Dempsey; Dean of Undergraduate Education, Andy Blanchard; Dean of Graduate Studies, Austin Cunningham; Chief of Police, Larry Zacharias; Bookstore Manager, Brian Weiskopf; Dean of Students, Gene Fitch; Media Services Representative, Darren Crone; Alumni Relations Representative, Erin Dougherty and appointed in FY 15, Rena Piper, Event Planner from the Office of the President and Lauraine O'Neil, Office of Communications.

2. Meetings

Two meetings of the Commencement Committee were conducted during the 2014-2015 academic year. A meeting held on September 23, 2014 discussed the Spring, 2014 ceremonies results and upcoming Fall, 2014 ceremonies. [Meeting agenda and minutes are attached.]

The second meeting of the Committee was held on February 15, 2015 to discuss Fall, 2014 results and in preparation for the Spring, 2015 commencement ceremonies. [Meeting agenda and minutes are attached.]

COMMENCEMENT COMMITTEE 2014-2015

Category	First	Last	Title	9/20/2014	2/5/2015
Ex-Officio	Judy	Barnes	Director of University Events (Chair)	X	X
Ex-Officio	Andy	Blanchard	Dean of Undergraduate Education		X
Ex-Officio	Darren	Crone	Media Services	X	X
Ex-Officio	Austin	Cunningham	Dean of Graduate Studies	X	X
Ex-Officio	Rick	Dempsey	Associate VP for Facilities Management	Kelly Kinnard	X
Ex-Officio	Erin	Dougherty	Alumni Services	X	X
Ex-Officio	Gene	Fitch	Dean of Students	X	X
Ex-Officio	Jennifer	McDowell	University Registrar and Director of Academic Records	X	X
Ex-Officio	Lauraine	O'Neil	Office of Communications	Ray Willihoft	X
Ex-Officio	Rena	Piper	Event Planner - Office of the President	X	X
Ex-Officio	Tim	Redman	Speaker of the Faculty (Vice Chair)	Murray Leaf	X
Ex-Officio	Brian	Weiskopf	Bookstore Manager		X
Ex-Officio	Larry	Zacharias	Chief of Police	X	X
Faculty	Kathryn	Evans	Faculty Appointment	X	
Faculty	Bruce	Jacobs	Faculty Appointment		X
Students	Brooke	Knudtson	Student Government President	X	X
Students	Garrett	Staas	UG-ECS		X
				Guest	Wanda Trotta

**Commencement Committee Meeting
September 23, 2014
Agenda**

- I. Welcome
 - a. New Committee Members

- II. Review of Spring 2014 Commencement
 - a. 9 Ceremonies

 - b. RSVP at Time of Application

 - c. Accessible Ramp

 - d. ECS Senior Project

- III. Fall 2014 Commencement
 - a. Initial Application and RSVP Numbers

 - b. Ceremonies

 - c. Omit Alumni Speech

 - d. Later Dates—will run into Winter Break (end earlier on Sat. to break down)

 - e. Countdown to Commencement—September 30

- IV. Discussion
 - a. Student Speakers—Deadline November 3

 - b. Orator solutions

 - c. Faculty Regalia and Sale

 - d. Summer Graduate Walk Policy—current catalog Fall only

 - e. Miscellaneous

Commencement Committee Meeting
September 23, 2014
Minutes

- I. In Attendance: Judy Barnes, Darren Crone, Austin Cunningham, Erin Dougherty, Gene Fitch, Jennifer McDowell, Rena Piper, Larry Zacharias, Kathryn Evans, Brooke Knudston, Murray Leaf (in lieu of Tim Redman), Ray Willhoft (in lieu of Lauraine O'Neil), Kelly Kinnard (in lieu of Rick Dempsey), and Wanda Trotta (guest)

- II. Welcome
 - a. New Committee Members – Judy Barnes introduced new members to the committee and discussed who was no longer with the committee. A representative from Communications was added to our member list and Student AccessAbility was withdrawn as they reside under the Dean of Students who serves on the committee.

- III. Review of Spring 2014 Commencement
 - a. 9 Ceremonies (11 with Hooding and Honors included) – Judy reviewed participation numbers with the committee and discussed the decreased time of 30 minutes between ceremonies. The decreased time seemed to work well for all parties involved and we will continue to schedule the ceremonies in 2.5 hr intervals.

 - b. RSVP at Time of Application – This past Spring was the first time the Registrar office allowed graduates to RSVP for commencement participation at the same time they applied to graduate. This system helped us to get fairly accurate predictions for the ceremonies and we will continue this with future ceremonies.

 - c. Accessible Ramp – It was decided to retire the wheelchair ramp due to being unreliable. As another accommodation option, we added an accessible ramp for disability access to the stage. The ramp was successfully utilized by two students and received positive feedback from faculty and staff. Media Services also added that it made their access easier as well. We will begin meeting with vendors this semester to have a ramp installed for Fall ceremonies.

 - d. ECS Senior Project – A senior group was assigned a project to debut during graduation involving RFID cards that would be scanned as students crossed the stage to display their name on the screen above the stage. The project was approved to be tested during one of the ceremonies and worked successfully. However, because we do not have the department or staff to manage the program, we will not be utilizing it in the future.

IV. Fall 2014 Commencement

- a. Initial Application and RSVP Numbers – numbers have come in and it appears we can carry out commencement in 6-7 ceremonies.
- b. Ceremonies – Judy proposed 7 ceremonies with 4 taking place on Friday (ECS, JSOMU, JSOMG1, JSOMG2) and 3 on Saturday (AH/NSM, EPPS/IS, BBS). Austin then proposed an alternative schedule after looking at the numbers with only having 6 ceremonies keeping the original 4 on Friday and moving IS with AH/NSM and combining BBS and EPPS. The committee unanimously agreed to this suggestion.
- c. Omit Alumni Speech – the VP for Development and Alumni Relations has recently left the university. With this departure, Judy asked the committee how they felt with eliminating the Alumni speech. Erin agreed with this recommendation but suggested Dr. Daniel briefly welcome them as alumni and announces the Memories on the Mall. The committee supported this idea.
- d. Later Dates—will run into Winter Break (end earlier on Sat. to break down) – Last Spring, the Student Government President surveyed students across campus to ask for their preference on Commencement dates for Fall (early December before finals or Late December immediately following finals). The students all responded with wanting to have the ceremonies take place following their finals. Therefore, Fall commencement is taking place December 19 & 20.
- e. Countdown to Commencement—September 30 – Will be held in the VCB atrium as in the past. Rena worked with Julianne Fowler to have a magnet created which listed all of the important dates for commencement listed to hand out to students.

V. Discussion

- a. Student Speakers—Deadline November 3 – New application is posted and available. The first ad ran in this week's Mercury. This year, the committee will request finalist to submit a video of their speech to aid in making final decisions.
- b. Orator solutions – Judy discussed with the committee the difficulty of locating orators for the ceremonies each semester. Options for hiring outside orators were not supported by the committee. Instead, the committee suggested charging the associate deans of each school with the responsibility. Judy will present the suggestion to the Deans Council for their support.

- c. Faculty Regalia and Sale – In the past, the President’s Office has paid for the regalia rentals for the first 50 faculty. However, there are several key faculty members who continuously take advantage of this benefit for multiple regalia required events instead of purchasing their own. The committee suggested no longer offering to pay for rentals and instead providing the rental information to the faculty along with regalia sale information to encourage them to purchase their own.
- d. Summer Graduate Walk Policy—current catalog Fall only – Undergraduate and graduate students only. This does not include doctoral hooding.
- e. Miscellaneous –
- Erin mentioned she has been receiving numerous questions from students wondering why we do not host commencement at another larger venue off of campus. Austin commented that we surveyed the students years ago and they wanted it on campus and, additionally, there isn’t a place to go. Erin recommended surveying the student body again as a means to validate our decisions with the students. Judy asked the committee if anyone was interested in steering the survey for the student body and Brooke volunteered. All suggested questions will be sent to Rena for Judy and Rena to review. Judy and Rena will then communicate these approved questions with Brooke. Austin suggested the university consider moving to school based ceremonies in the future with one large commencement for all. It was agreed by the committee that this was not ideal at this time.
 - Darren requested a minimum of 3 days for set-up of media services for commencement. Judy requested a set-up flow chart from them. Rena will follow-up with Darren on exact set-up dates.

**Commencement Committee Meeting
February 5, 2015
Agenda**

- I. Welcome
- II. Review of Fall 2014 Commencement
 - a. 6 Ceremonies
 - b. Returned to after finals
 - c. RSVP at Time of Application—first for Fall as we started in Spring
 - d. Speaker videos before selection
 - e. ETC...regalia orders, omitted Alumni speech, orators, MOM weather
- III. Spring 2015 Commencement
 - a. Initial Application and RSVP Numbers
 - b. Ceremonies – 9 ... 2 Thurs., 4 Fri., 3 Sat. [or 8?]
 - c. Countdown to Commencement—February
- IV. Discussion
 - a. Student Speakers—Deadline March 25
 - b. Summer Graduate Walk Policy—process for approving exceptions
 - c. Revisit Student Survey
 - d. Miscellaneous

**Commencement Committee Meeting
February 5, 2015
Agenda**

I. In attendance: Judy Barnes, Andy Blanchard, Darren Crone, Austin Cunningham, Rick Dempsey, Erin Dougherty, Gene Fitch, Jennifer McDowell, Lauraine, O’Neil, Rena Piper, Tim Redman, Brian Weiskopf, Larry Zacharias, Bruce Jacobs, Brooke Knudtson, and Garrett Staas

II. Review of Fall 2014 Commencement

a. 6 Ceremonies – Judy discussed RSVP and participation numbers.

Ceremony	RSVP	Attended
ECS – Fri. 9am	440	375
JSOMU – Fri. 11:30am	345	301
JSOMG1 – Fri. 2pm	218	257
JSOMG2 – Fri. 4:30pm	244	185
AH/IS/NSM – Sat. 9am	325	282
BBS/EPPS – Sat. 11:30am	312	255

b. Returned to after finals – Size of ceremonies and later December dates after finals concluded worked well and received positive feedback from students. We will continue to schedule later dates moving forward. Time between start of one ceremony to the start of the next (2.5 hrs) proved to be challenging when the “weather plan” for MOM was implemented. We will continue with 2.5 hrs increments but will need to make alternative weather plans (see below).

c. RSVP at Time of Application—first for Fall as we started in Spring 2014 – Will continue with this process moving forward.

d. Speaker videos before selection – For the Fall Student Speaker application process, we required finalists selected by the committee to send in a video of their speech delivery as the last step in the review process before picking the speaker. This proved to be very beneficial and efficient in the selection process and the committee will continue with this process moving forward.

e. ETC...regalia orders, omitted Alumni speech, orators, MOM weather

- Regalia orders – This Fall was the last semester the Office of the President will rent regalia for faculty participating in commencement. Faculty are now encouraged to purchase their own regalia versus renting. The Office of the

President will keep a small supply on hand for those who need them; on a first come, first serve basis.

- Omitted Alumni speech – Last Spring we opted to omit the Alumni speech from the commencement script and decided to continue with that same format for the Fall. With the merge of Development and Alumni Relations and Office of Communications, we revisited this topic to see if we should consider adding the speech back in. All were in favor of continuing to omit the speech. Recommendation will be made to the President.
- Orators – In Fall we implemented a stipend for staff who orated during commencement. This seemed to help alleviate the stress with finding people to commit to helping with this task during commencement. We will continue with this process moving forward.
- MOM weather plan – We were forced to implement the MOM weather plan during the Fall ceremonies. This proved to be quite difficult to get the people out of the gymnasium in a timely manner and posed a huge safety risk with the amount of people in the building. All agreed that this process would not be done again. Suggestions were given for the following: placing alumni gift under chairs; setting up a tent shelter outdoors; or presenting gifts as they exit the stage to return to their chairs. Alumni relations will discuss suggestions and notify us of their updated weather plan.

III. Spring 2015 Commencement

a. Initial Application and RSVP Numbers

School	RSVP #
A&H	240
BBS	387
ECS	740
EPPS	204
IS	80
JSOM	875 Grad/ 434 Undergrad
NSM	334

- b. Ceremonies – 9 ... 2 Thurs., 4 Fri., 3 Sat. [or 8?] – Recommendation of the committee to proceed with 8 ceremonies (2 Thurs., 3 Fri., 3 Sat.). Committee also suggested that moving forward there should be a set ticket allocation standard minimum of 5 tickets across the board for each ceremony and issue extras when able.
- c. Countdown to Commencement—February 24

IV. Discussion

- a. Student Speakers—Deadline March 25 – will add advertisement to digital boards across campus
- b. Summer Graduate Walk Policy—process for approving exceptions – both undergraduate and graduate deans opposed to exceptions. Recommendation made for school based recognitions.
- c. Revisit Student Survey
- d. Miscellaneous