

Commencement Committee Minutes
Meeting via ZOOM on Friday, October 23

ATTENDEES: H. Van Oostrom (chair); S. Anwar; M. Bowie; F. Bridgewater-Alford; A. Cardenas; M. Carodine; T. Garrett; B. Goldberger; K. Jedlicka; C. Komanski; G. Lord; Z. Mou; R. Pomp; L. Reinhart; S. McBride; S. Van Deree; J. Wright

NOT PRESENT: S. Dore; A. Lindner; S. Pritz

Call to order: 2:03pm

2020 Commencements have been virtual due to COVID-19.

- How they've been designed and executed:
 - They were virtual *celebrations* in the spring, with the expectation that we'd hold in-person make-up ceremonies at the end of the summer. When we came to understand that would not occur in the summer, and now the fall, we moved to more formal virtual *commencements*.
 - Ceremonies are held per college, to reflect the interests and focus of the attendee, and to manage the screen time.
- Feedback
 - Much like in-person ceremonies, the piece deemed most important to both graduate and guest is the personal recognition. That's where the attention to details have become more focused the last two semesters.
 - Feedback focused in the virtual ceremonies themselves (as opposed to the attention on the lack of in-person ceremonies) was overall improved between the spring and summer; the efforts were appreciated. We're using the feedback from the summer to improve and plan our fall virtual commencement ceremonies.
- Other discussion
 - How were they/could they be interactive?
ANSWER: Some were hosted on YouTube or as a ZOOM webinar so [moderated] conversations, feedback, and notes of congratulations could take place in real-time as the ceremonies were available for the first time. Additionally, some colleges held virtual "receptions" per department/unit to allow for more intimate and informal connections and interactive experiences.

SUGGESTION: A montage of the highlights of virtual commencements.

ACTION ITEM: S. McBride will send the "list of highlights" from each college ceremony to the committee.

Plans for 2020 make-up ceremonies.

- This model assumes the O'Connell Center is back to standard operating procedures.
 - As shown in the separate handout, there are 4 days set aside in the O'Connell Center for ceremonies. Each day is mathematically equal if all colleges' graduates participated with 1/3 attrition from 2020. This would mean holding 3 ceremonies a day, all coordinated by central commencement.
 - There is a registration system being written now. Once done, it will then be made available, with a registration deadline. Once the number of registrants per day is known, the number of ceremonies necessary per day will be understood and ceremony times can be identified.

MOTION: Second set of dates with an updated plan for Spring '21 grads in-place, in case the original weekend is not feasible.

(motion: F. Bridgewater-Alford; 2nd: M. Bowie)

Motion carried unanimously.

ACTION ITEM: S. McBride will bring this idea to the president. Secondly, will work with the O'Connell Center to identify known weekends of conflict due to sports schedules.

Spring Schedule Update

Informational Item Only

The spring schedule is in draft form, awaiting approval from the colleges. It will take place between April 29-May 2. There will be a University Wide Doctoral Ceremony (in the O'Connell Center), a University Wide Ceremony (in the stadium), and college recognition ceremonies where graduates' names are called individually as they cross the stage. Recognition ceremonies are held in the Phillips Center and the O'Connell Center. We hope to release this schedule by the end of November.

This schedule operates under the assumption that a vaccine is available and social distancing is no longer required, and venues can work under standard operating procedures.

Potentially moving spring Friday finals off the roster (long-term plan)

Informational Item Only

There is review of the feasibility of moving Friday finals in the spring off the docket. This will not happen in Spring '21, as this would involve a change to the academic process, thus must go through the Curriculum Committee and the Faculty Senate for review and vote. Right now, the Associate Provost and President are looking at the number of seniors who are scheduled for finals on Fridays in the spring.

The reason for this is because we cannot fit all graduates in Friday evening through Sunday ceremonies. Equally we wish to avoid causing more conflicts on Fridays with finals than necessary. So, the feasibility of moving finals off Fridays is a discussion.

WOOT Policy Proposal, Round 2

- As seen on the other attachment, this is the second draft of the Walk Out of Term proposal, to provide a more consistent approach to the approval process from college to college and avoid ceremony number overages.
 - Discussion regarding how many credits is reasonable to have remaining and still being permitted to walk early. Discussion regarding how many semesters after graduation is reasonable to walk post-graduation (COVID-19 affected graduation classes excluded)
 - Discussion about “exemption” language being clear/strong enough. Decided: yes.

MOTION: Approve for presentation to the Provost for approval as-is.

(motion: G. Lord; 2nd: J. Wright)

1 abstain. 1 objection. Motion carried.

ACTION ITEM: S. McBride will send policy to Provost for review and approval or feedback for further consideration by the committee.

Other Topics

President’s article about “Why In-Person Football But Not In-Person Commencement”

https://www.alligator.org/opinion/fuchs-seventeen-thousand-fans-for-football-games-but-no-in-person-graduation/article_2e51bca8-12a3-11eb-b623-37d3b35b624a.html

Adjourn: 3:08pm