

Faculty Senate Commencement Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
December 6, 2017

Attendance

Susan Carrafiello	COLA
✓ Alysoun Taylor-Hall (Chair)	CECS
Bridgett Severt	COSM
Jeannie Marchand	COLA
✓ Lynne Kelley	CONH
✓ Eric Rowley	COSM
✓ Kimberly Dove	Student Government
✓ Beth Metcalf	Student Government
✓ Fran Keeley	Student Government
Travis Doom	Office of Ceremonies (Ex-officio/NV)
	Faculty President (Ex-officio/NV)

I. Approval of Minutes – The minutes of the October 18, 2017 meeting were approved.

II. Honorary Degree Timeline Discussion

The committee held extensive discussions regarding a request from the President's Office to modify the Honorary Degree submission timeline. Alysoun Taylor-Hall explained the full packet schedule and the obstacles with meeting the requested January 8 deadline. Members of the committee also expressed concerns regarding the handling of past approved nominees, and considered whether the committee should submit new degree approvals until the administration rules on past submissions.

The committee agreed that Alysoun Taylor-Hall and Eric Rowley should meet with the President to discuss the issues with the timeline request. In the meantime, previously approved honorary degree applicants can be (re)submitted to the President's Office by January 8<sup>th</sup> while nominations from 2017-2018 will have to follow the current policy and be considered at the end of January 2018.

III. Due to the timeline request, the committee decided to instruct Eric Rowley to make a motion to table Policy 3670 (Honorary Degree, Commencement Committee Membership & Purpose) until the timeline issue can be resolved. ADDENDUM: After discussions with the Senate Executive Committee, it was decided to allow the Senate to vote on the policy as written. The policy passed and is awaiting Provost approval (as of 1/24/2018).

IV. Adjourn – the next meeting will be planned via email.

Commencement Committee  
January 24, 2018  
Meeting Minutes

Attendees

Alysoun Taylor-Hall, Susan Carrafiello, Jeannette Marchand, Bridgett Severt, Eric Rowley  
Beth Metcalf, Kimberly Dove, Fran Keeley, Travis Doom

I. The minutes of the December 6, 2017 meeting were approved.

II. Honorary Degree Discussion

The committee reviewed two completed nomination packets. One packet, while worthy, was rejected because the individual did not satisfy guideline #5 concerning their current affiliation with the University. The other packet was unanimously approved by the committee to be submitted to President Schrader.

Alysoun Taylor-Hall announced that she has a meeting with the President next week to submit the nominations and discuss other commencement related issues. The President has previously indicated more flexibility with the degree submission timeline, and has asked the committee to consider decoupling honorary degrees and commencement speakers. The reasons for the request include allowing speakers to be chosen for their speaking ability, and to allow for recorded speakers without issuing a degree to the speaker. The committee felt concern that such a measure would remove the highest ideal of an honorary degree / speaker and moves towards commercialization.

III. Fall 2017 Commencement Ceremony - feedback and questions

The committee reviewed a recent charge (attached) from Faculty President Doom:

a. Songs

The student organization Ethos has been used for the last three years; previously a faculty member was the sole singer. In Spring 2018, an ASL class will provide sign-language accompaniment during the National Anthem.

As for song choices, Ethos submitted three songs for consideration and President Schrader made the final choice.

b. Staff & Other Participation

The committee discussed issues surrounding staff participation in commencement ceremonies including ticketing, seating, and which staff should be able to participate.

- Reserved or box seating at ceremony
- Staff with relation to graduate (tie to staff tuition remission eligibility)
- Non-family staff (student employee supervisors, advisers, etc)
- Petition process

The committee agreed to invite Jason Bickford, Event Services, and Tami Smith, Registrar's Office, to a future meeting to continue discussions.

c. Disruptions

Those present felt that the Fall 2017 ceremony had fewer disruptions than previous ceremonies, however the committee concluded that more brain storming is required to make additional improvements.

d. Alumni Association

Brief discussions were held about streamlining the Alumni Association portion and making it less similar to a sales pitch. Additional discussions are needed.

e. Student Org fundraiser support

Brief discussions were held about student organization fundraisers at commencement. The committee concluded that a cursory investigation is necessary to determine typical sales and if other items can be introduced. Alysoun Taylor-Hall agreed to reach out to the various student organizations for more information.

IV. Adjourn – the next meeting will be 3:00pm, Wednesday, February 7

ADDENDUM: The meeting was canceled due to University weather closure and rescheduled for 3:00pm, Wednesday, February 14

Alysoun,

I'd like to charge the commencement committee to provide a report with recommendations to improve the commencement ceremony. If possible, I'd like a committee response by Feb 2018 so that we have time to work with the President's Office and Event Services to enact changes in the Spring 2018 ceremony.

As is normal post commencement, there have been several questions and recommendations sent my way regarding the last commencement ceremony.

I'd like to share a few of them to serve as a starting place to your consideration list. Please forgive the informality of these unstructured comments as I am attempting to combine several different sources.

#1 Songs. A common question is 'why Ethos'? They do a great job...

no complaints on that score..., but why that particular set of students/group? Is this something that music faculty are involved in?

Is it sustainable? We clearly want talented students leading the National Anthem and Alma Mater, but should it always be this group?

Also, why do we also have a musical performance number? Why is it "Home"? The general recommendation is to remove that performance piece and save 2-3 minutes.

#2 Staff participation. What are the pros/cons of having a staff seating area to facilitate staff attendance? Also, should we make standard practice to allow any full-time employee of the university to present a diploma to a graduating relative? Currently, this privilege is extended to Faculty, but not staff. At my request, Fran put together a trial run for Fall 2017 and developed some nice expectations/requirements (including garb) for the test run. Did that work? Should we do it again (and announce it) or is this a bad idea?

The final recommendation should come from the committee.

#3 Students creating disruptions in the stands during the awarding of diplomas. Most comments focus on the students leaving or otherwise being disruptive after their section has finished. This is particularly true of the graduate student section. It may be necessary to provide further coaching/directions either in the ceremony itself or perhaps on the back of the 'name card'. It must be made clear to all participants that everyone is expected to stay until the ceremony is complete. Perhaps anyone needing an emergency exit must be accompanied by a Marshal? Marshals can be coached to not make exceptions for lunch reservations or other issues that are not of an immediate emergency nature. Essentially we need to be structured and pragmatic about this or it will continue to be a concern. There has been a recommendation to use pretty ropes and more faculty marshals as aisle guards. Would this create safety issues?

#4 Post award ceremony. The consensus seems to be that there is little patience for the ceremony after the presentation of diplomas.

We should consider the extent to which the words from the Alumni Association is useful (or even heard) at that point in the program.

Perhaps the Alumni Association should simply say a sentence or two of welcome and they help lead the Alma Mater? Perhaps they could deliver the housekeeping instructions as well (to avoid a speaker switch). Or the Grand Marshal could do so as the final act before taking up the staff/mace and beginning the recessional?

#6 Recessional. Apparently, there is a bottleneck that forms up near the gym as most students on the bottom floors turn towards the stairs and then bottleneck the ground-floor recessional. I've got no thoughts on this, other than making certain that students are allowed to head up into the Aisles should they wish to do so?

#5 Sales. There may be an opportunity to sell teddy bears, flowers, champagne, picture keychains, or other momentos on the concourse before/after the ceremony. Apparently some universities funds some scholarships with the net profit that generally results from these activities.

I'm certain that the committee will find items at least as worthy of consideration as the items above. Please reach out to Event Services and the President's Office to see if they have recommendations for consideration. Please work with Fran to include any administrative concerns/improvements to the consideration list as well. If you'd like to reach out formally to the faculty, please let me or the faculty office know how we can best support the effort.

Thank you!

I'd be happy to stop by and chat about these or any other issues if my comments would be helpful.

Regards,

Travis Doom  
Faculty President

Commencement Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
February 14, 2018

Attendees

Susan Carrafiello, Alysoun Taylor-Hall, Bridgett Severt, Jeannie Marchand, Lynne Kelley, Eric Rowley, Beth Metcalf, Kimberly Dove, Fran Keeley, Jason Bickford (Event Services)

- I. Minutes of the January 24, 2018 meeting were approved.
- II. Announcements
  - a. Alysoun Taylor-Hall announced that [CONFIDENTIAL] has been selected to receive an honorary degree at Spring 2018 commencement pending final Board of Trustee approval.
  - b. President Schrader is moving forward with a luncheon the Friday before the Commencement Ceremony. Additional information will be forthcoming.

III. Commencement Participation Policy

The committee held extensive discussions on proposed changes to the Commencement Participation policy by the International Education Advisory Committee. A summary of the committee's concerns and subsequent communications between IEAC chair, Commencement chair, and Faculty President are included as attachments.

IV. Commencement Speakers

The committee briefly discussed a request from the President's Office for guidelines to help determine non-honorary-degree commencement-speakers. For example, can politicians be invited to speak at a commencement ceremony?

Current	<b>3685.1 Policy --- IEAC Recommendation</b>
<p>Commencement ceremonies constitute public acknowledgement that students have completed education requirements of the University. Students are eligible to participate in the first commencement ceremony following the completion of their course of study.</p> <p>All exceptions to this policy must be approved by the dean of the appropriate college or school, who will forward approved requests to the Office of the Registrar so that students may be included in commencement ceremonies. Exceptions shall generally be restricted to mandatory relocation or documented emergency.</p>	<p>Commencement ceremonies constitute public acknowledgement that students have completed education requirements of the University. Students are eligible to participate in either the first or second commencement ceremony following the completion of their course of study.</p> <p><u><a href="#">Students who sign up to attend a commencement ceremony and fail to appear must submit a petition to the Faculty Senate Commencement Committee to attend a future ceremony.</a></u></p> <p>Students may submit a petition to the Faculty Senate Commencement Committee to request permission to participate in a ceremony outside the ceremonies listed above. Participation in a ceremony before completing all coursework will only be considered in cases of documented emergency. Participation in ceremonies more than two semesters after completing a course of studies requires documentation to justify the rationale for the delay.</p>

**Commented [w1]:** Committee unable to perform the administrative tasks that result from this policy proposal. Which department houses / collects the petitions? Where are records kept? Registrar's Office?

Committee cannot process visa letters resulting from approved petitions. Recommends UCIE &/or Graduate School process these letters.

Committee and Event Services expect Spring 2019 Commencement at the earliest if policy approved by April 2018

Committee recommends a fee for petitions and/or participating in a ceremony after the first eligible ceremony.

**Commented [w2]:** Likely to increase the size of Spring ceremonies

**Commented [w3]:** Tie to deadline to register to graduate (~3weeks prior)

**Commented [w4]:** Tie to deadline to register to graduate (~3weeks prior)

**Deleted:** Students who sign up to attend a commencement ceremony, and fail to appear must petition to attend a future ceremony.¶

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### Commencement Committee follow-up to IEAC

The Commencement Committee and a representative from Event Services just finished reviewing the IEAC draft of the commencement participation policy and has several concerns. (see comments and tracked changes in attached document)

#### Administrative Support

- Committee unable to perform the administrative tasks that result from this policy proposal.
- Which department houses / collects the petitions?
- Where are records kept? Registrar's Office?
- Committee cannot process visa letters resulting from approved petitions. Recommends UCIE &/or Graduate School process these letters.

#### Other

- update policy with deadline to submit petition (tied to X-weeks prior graduation application deadline)
- Committee and Event Services expect policy to increase the size of Spring ceremonies (potentially decreasing the number of tickets per student / seats per family member)
- Committee recommends an additional fee for petitions and/or participating in a ceremony after the first eligible ceremony.
- Committee would like to see how dean's offices have processed past requests, and data on number of students who have petitioned for past ceremonies
- Committee and Event Services expect implementation for Spring 2019 Commencement at the earliest if policy approved by April 2018

### IEAC reply

Alysoun,

To be clear, the IEAC feels strongly that international students need the flexibility to attend a later commencement exercise. There are so many issues related to travel, visa, and expenses that impact the international students' families ability to come to the US giving them some options is appropriate. After some discussion, the IEAC felt that it might be problematic to suggest only international students should be offered this flexibility so we drafted a policy that is open to all students. We certainly are not tied to the idea that this need to be open to all students.

Our plan was to leave the implementation details to the administration. For example, our thought was implementation would include a cut-off date for requests to attend a later ceremony. We also assumed your committee would develop criteria that would allow for a staff member to administratively approve certain types of requests so only special request/petitions would come to your committee. There is certainly no reason to not require a fee for allowing students to attend a later ceremony. This is exactly the model that is used by the Parking and Transportation Committee for handling parking tickets (staff applied criteria, petition committee, appeal to Chair of Parking and Transportation).

### Commencement Committee response

There was definitely a lot of concern among the committee members over the administrative burden. By the end of the discussion, I think there was general consensus that the committee can provide faculty oversight of the decision-making process as long as we have appropriate administrative support. For example, we definitely do not want to be responsible for writing visa letters or gathering student information. As long as we can create an appropriate system, I don't think the committee objects to doing just the decision-making piece of it.

We completely agree that we would need to create guidelines so that the majority of the decisions can be standardized. The committee would then weigh in on the tough cases. The hitch here is that the committee feels that we would need a lot of information that we don't currently have available to us to develop these guidelines. So if this goes forward, we'll need to figure out exactly how to tackle that. There was certainly some sentiment within the committee that we should wait until we have more information to "accept" the responsibility, but I pointed out that the committee doesn't necessarily get a vote in that. We can express our concerns and ask for more information, but we can't expect the staff to develop an implementation plan in advance of approving the policy. So I expect the policy will be approved first, and then we will figure it out. This is part of why we expect a longer period for implementation, during which the dean's offices may need to continue using the old procedures.

The biggest sticking point was over the two bites at the apple. I did definitely convey to the committee that this is seen as a compromise position between limiting the students to one opportunity without a petition process and allowing them even more time, such as letting them walk as long as they have an ongoing relationship, such as OPT. I also conveyed the reasons why international students may need more time for their families to attend.

The biggest concern was not the behavior of the international students. Rather, the committee is concerned that once this policy becomes known, large numbers of domestic students may take advantage of it so that they can walk in the spring when the weather is nice. We have two students on our committee, and we asked them, and they both thought that delaying graduation until spring would be an attractive option. We asked how high the fee would have to be to deter this behavior, and they suggested \$75 to \$100. I don't think a fee that high will be feasible, however.

Jason Bickford from Events Services was at the meeting, and he explained that if we shift a large number of students from Winter to Spring, the result is likely to be that the students will have to use tickets for their families, and the number of tickets per student will be limited. This runs counter to the goal of accommodating families who want to attend.

Several members of the committee expressed a willingness to support a policy that specifically allows two semesters only for international students. I expressed to the committee that I didn't think the Executive Committee would support a policy that didn't treat all students equally. And so we are left with a conundrum. There is no lack of sympathy for the needs of the international students--there is merely concern for potential unintended consequences.

We could not solve this problem, so we are merely passing along our concern.

I appreciate your offer to attend, but at this point, I think our committee has discussed the proposed policy pretty thoroughly, and I don't expect to devote more time to the topic at our next meeting. I think we have offered the input that we have, and now we will wait to see what everyone else thinks.

Again, I don't think that you should interpret our comments as a strong objection to carrying out the role envisioned for us. Our concerns are more about how we get from Point A to Point B. As long as the Faculty Senate is confident that we will have the cooperation and resources to create a new system for processing requests, I think you can count on us to fulfill our assigned role.

Faculty President

Perhaps it may be a good idea to get a few of the staff members that handle the petition process now (including the registrar, a graduate school staff member, and maybe a college staff member or two (I think Angie Griffith currently handles this for CECS)) to find how what paperwork needs to be done, and what support is needed. Ideally, this should be set up like undergraduate petitions - the committee rules, as needed, on the cases and staff collects petitions and finalizes action. Right now, that effort is distributed to multiple locations.

Commencement Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
February 21, 2018

Attendees

Susan Carrafiello, Alysoun Taylor-Hall, Bridgett Severt, Jeannie Marchand, Eric Rowley  
Kimberly Dove, Fran Keeley, Jason Bickford (Event Services), Tami Smith (Registrar's Office)

I. Minutes of the February 14, 2018 meeting were approved as written.

II. Commencement Participation Policy

The committee and invited guests reviewed the policy proposal from IEAC and feedback from the Graduate School, and then reached the following consensus:

1. The committee does not support the IEAC proposal of allowing students to walk in the second ceremony following their graduation for the following reasons:
  - The IEAC proposal is not consistent with other Ohio institutions.
  - Event Services and Registrar's Office firmly believe this policy, as written, will cause lopsided ceremonies by increasing Spring attendance and decreasing Fall attendance. The concern is that domestic students may prefer to walk in the Spring for their own reasons. Furthermore, lopsided ceremonies will lead to ticketing issues for Spring ceremonies.
  - Changing the language to open second ceremonies only to international students was not supported by the committee.
  - Second ceremony tracking will increase the administrative burden on Event Services & Registrar's Office.
  - The Commencement Committee has concerns about writing foreign invitation letters, especially for later semesters. The concern is that the institution could unwittingly facilitate multiple entry visas for reasons other than attending the ceremony.
  - Live streaming of the ceremony is available from anywhere in the world. Families that are unable to attend the ceremony can watch via live stream without travel costs or visa issues.
2. The committee is willing to rule on petitions as long as it is not responsible for the administrative burden.
  - The committee recommends that the deadline to petition is written into policy and coordinated with the registrar's office similar to the undergraduate academic petitions process.
3. The committee recommends that the University set an additional fee to petition starting with the second petition.

**ADDENDUM:**

At the request of the Executive Committee, policy language was drafted based on the consensus and sent to the committee for comment and then to the Undergraduate Academic Policies Committee (UAPC). UAPC reviewed the proposals from IEAC and Commencement Committee and chose to recommend the Commencement Committee's language.

**Commencement Participation Policy – Commencement Committee draft**

Commencement ceremonies constitute public acknowledgement that students have completed education requirements of the University. Students are eligible to participate in the first commencement ceremony following the completion of their course of study.

Exceptions to this policy are restricted to mandatory relocation or documented emergency. A student may submit a request for such an exception by submitting a completed Commencement Participation Petition Form to the Office of the Registrar. Petitions must be submitted at least 4 weeks prior to deadline to register for commencement.

In coordination with the Office of the Registrar, the Faculty Senate Commencement Committee will meet to rule on all submitted petitions for the upcoming ceremony. The Office of the Registrar will then communicate the ruling of the committee via WSU email in time to allow for commencement registration.

Students who successfully petition but then fail to appear must petition again to participate in a subsequent ceremony. The Registrar's Office may choose to adopt, with Faculty Senate approval, an administrative fee to submit a petition starting with a student's second petition.

Regardless of circumstances, no student may participate in a commencement ceremony beyond the fifth year after the completion of their course of study.

**III. Staff members awarding degrees at Commencement**

After brief discussions, the committee recommended that Event Services to continue as-is for one semester.

**IV. Adjourn – the next meeting is scheduled for 3:00pm, March 7, 2018**