

Faculty Senate Commencement Committee
Report and Recommendations
April 2018

Committee Members

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Charge

The Faculty Senate Commencement Committee was charged by the Faculty President to make recommendations regarding several aspects of recent commencement ceremonies.

Committee Recommendations

I. Musical Performance(s)

The committee was asked to investigate the matter by which musical performer(s) and songs are chosen, and to make recommendations on whether to remove or reduce musical performances.

a. Why Ethos?

Ethos was chosen because it was a student acapella group. Previous ceremonies featured a single faculty or student singer. Acapella groups are logistically easier to support since they bring their own microphones and have no other equipment.

b. How was the song choice made?

President Schrader chose the song from among three choices suggested by the group.

c. Recommendations

- The committee voted 6-1 in favor of including the opening song.
- All members were in favor of rotating between student music groups that can perform acapella arrangements.
- All members were in favor of inviting the Music Department to help screen songs to recommend to President Schrader. This request should be made at the beginning of each semester to ensure that the groups have enough time to prepare an appropriate selection. Additionally, participating music groups should be asked to use audience- friendly arrangements of the National Anthem and Alma mater.

II. Staff Participation

The committee was asked to discuss the pros/cons of staff participation in commencement ceremonies, including awarding degrees to family members.

After discussions, the committee concluded to continue as-is for one more semester in order to collect more data and investigate peer institution policies. The committee is concerned about promoting the option for staff to award degrees and then later withdrawing the option.

A major concern was traffic flow during the presentation of degrees. Current faculty participation in awarding degrees already causes some disruption to the flow of students. Regular flow of students through this portion of the ceremony is essential to maintaining a timely ceremony. The concern is that if a large number of staff opt to participate, the traffic flow could get worse. Suggestions included having a photo-op setup to the side of the stage.

Previous surveys indicated that a small, but vocal, group of staff want to participate in Commencement ceremonies. The student representatives were split on the issue. The committee will reach out to Staff Council to seek feedback and other suggestions.

III. Disruptions

The committee was asked to discuss issues caused by students leaving the ceremony early.

The committee agrees that vigilance is required to encourage decorum and discourage disruptions. At the same time, students cannot be prevented from leaving at any time; they are adults and there are fire codes and other legalities to consider. The name card given to each student has instruction regarding leaving early, and the subject is also mentioned during the Provost's opening remarks.

The committee recommends:

- Ask Deans to send messages to the students prior to the ceremony and stress the need to stay for the entire ceremony and not disrupt other student's experience.
- Increase font size / visibility of name card message.
- Consider having graduate students commence last, since Masters students have often been the most likely to leave the ceremony early. It's possible that if we reverse the order, undergraduates will then be more likely to leave early.
- Send students who are leaving in the least disruptive direction.

IV. Post award Ceremony

The committee was asked to discuss perceived timing issues with the post award ceremony.

The post award ceremony has been made shorter over the years, and the Alumni Association speaker has been instructed not to make a sales pitch.

The committee voted to continue as-is, and will continue to monitor and review the issue.

V. Recessional

The committee was asked to make recommendations regarding bottlenecks that occur during the recessional.

Typically, two colleges will recess up the stairs and the others are recessed through to the McLin Gym. Bottlenecks occur when students try to directly access their guests in the stands or crowd the platform for photo opportunities.

The committee recommends closing the stage immediately after the ceremony and directing all graduates to the McLin Gym. For photo opportunities, a picture gallery is setup in the McLin Gym and a blue screen at Gate 2. Given the layout of the Nutter Center facility, the committee believes that some bottleneck is unavoidable.

VI. Sales

The committee was asked to discuss potential sales of mementos and trinkets as a student organization or scholarship fundraiser.

There is no strong indication that student organizations selling items at commencement make any substantial profits. At this time, the committee does not feel this is an area worth pursuing but will revisit the idea after the Spring 2018 ceremony.

Members of the committee will continue to attend every ceremony and make every effort to monitor problem areas. We invite continued feedback in the ongoing effort to offer our students the best possible Commencement experience.