

Provost's Committee on Commencement
Yearend Report – 2021-2022
Written by Jeffrey Tang, chair

Membership

Chair: Jeffrey Tang

Members: Dave Barnes (Student Union), Amy Brooks (CVPA), Kathryn Brown (TGS), Molly Brown (COB), Tammy Crawford (CHBS), Fawn-Amber Montoya (Honors), Dara Hall (COE), Doug Hochstetler (CHBS), Erica Kann (COB), Jake Krug (CISE), Scott Paulson (Univ. Programs), Sarah MacDonald (PCE), Fawn-Amber Montoya (Honors), Anne Neale (CSM), Melissa Rebich (COE), Laura Ryman (TGS), Tammy Steele (Honors), Wren Stevens (CVPA), Amy Thelk (COE), Siân White (CAL), Steven Whitmeyer (CSM), Shannon Wilson (CAL), Traci Zimmerman (CAL).

Charge: The Provost's Committee on Commencement is charged with advising the Provost on all matters directly and indirectly related to commencement activities on campus. These include the college ceremonies and the university ceremony, as well as the planning and preparation for those events. The committee meets on an as-needed basis and works closely with the university's committee on commencement organized by University Events in the Division of Access and Enrollment Management.

Summary of Current Semester Activity:

- This was an especially busy semester for the committee, as we were adjusting to having all of our ceremonies in Atlantic Union Bank Center (AUBC). In most ways, this is a very positive development, as it saves our coordinators much time and effort in setting up the platform, facility, etc. Doing it the first time in AUBC provided many challenges, too.
- The chair of the committee met regularly with University Events (UE) staff to plan for who would be responsible for what roles during planning and the commencement events themselves. The chair assumed the primary role for communicating updates to the coordinators, though some correspondence still came directly from UE staff.
- The college coordinators who were not able to attend the December 2021 ceremony scheduled walkthroughs with the committee chair and UE staff to make sure that they were familiar with the AUBC and the layout for commencement.
- The committee met several times during the spring semester to discuss updates and raise questions where there was some uncertainty.

- The chair worked with UE staff to create and populate a Teams site to serve as a repository for most/all of the relevant commencement planning documents. The chair also created and populated a shared calendar with key deadlines, which was then sent to committee.
- The coordinators received training from the Registrar's office and then each college created its own seating chart. In most cases, this had to be adjusted a few days before the ceremony to account for late registrants. Additionally, the coordinators organized the name cards and sent the seat assignments to each of the graduates.
- Coordinators or one of their volunteers got trained on using GradRoll for graduates' names to appear on the video board during the ceremony.
- The coordinators executed a variety of tasks, some of which were new. In addition to the seating assignments and GradRoll, they proofed program pages, coordinated on ceremony speakers and student award winners, created pre-ceremony slides, solicited and organized approximately 15 volunteers from their college, arranged for VIP tickets, ordered food and beverages (if opting to do so).
- The committee met after commencement to debrief and gather suggestions for modifications for next year. Some key highlights include:
 - Seating chart and names cards were most controversial, with some thinking they worked well (even one large college completed them in few hours) whereas others felt like the tasks were onerous and time-consuming. One suggestion for next year is to find an individual (not one of the coordinators) who could devote 20-30 hours in early May to doing all of the seating charts and handling the logistics related to name cards. This would lift a huge burden from the coordinators, and would not be especially onerous if an appropriate staff member can be found whose workload is a bit lighter at that time of year (timing is a bigger issue than to total workload with this task).
 - Colleges want more control over the script and the platform members, but are happy to have other logistical aspects more standardized.
 - Intoxication of graduates continues to be an issue, especially during the evening ceremonies.
 - Ceremonies should rotate in terms of their day and time, to the extent possible, for the sake of equity. We understand that there are some limitations on this because of operations logistics.

- Faculty ticketing process could be improved, as there was significant confusion this year.
- There is consensus among the coordinators that having all ceremonies in AUBC is ideal, and reduces the overall workload.

Future Work Planned:

- The chair has met with University Events (UE) to produce a list of recommendations for the May 2023 ceremonies; UE will share those with relevant stakeholders and decision-makers.
- The committee will meet next year as needed to continue solidifying our processes for commencement planning. It is anticipated that the work required by the committee will continue in coming years as we become more familiar with AUBC ceremonies and some of the areas of confusion become agreed upon.