

# **Provost's Committee on Commencement**

Yearend Report – 2022-2023

Written by Jeffrey Tang, chair

## **Membership:**

**Chair(s):** Jeffrey Tang (CISE)

**Members:** Dave Barnes (Student Union), Amy Brooks (CVPA), Cooper O-Neil (TGS), Molly Brown (COB), Tammy Crawford (CHBS), Fawn-Amber Montoya (Honors), Doug Hochstetler (CHBS), Betty Leviere (COB), Nikki Corley (CISE), Audrey Burnett (Univ. Programs), Daniel Robinson (PCE), Fawn-Amber Montoya (Honors), Anne Neale (CSM), Melissa Rebich (COE), Laura Ryman (TGS), Anastacia Martin (Honors), Wren Stevens (CVPA), Amy Thelk (COE) Steven Whitmeyer (CSM), Lori Patton (CAL); Siân White (CAL), Michele White (Registrar).

**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. The committee chair serves as a liaison for Academic Affairs in interacting with other divisions on commencement-related activities.

## **Summary of Current Semester Activity:**

- 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 May commencement events themselves. The chair assumed the primary role for communicating updates to the coordinators, though some correspondence still came directly from UE staff.
- Although still not seamless, the process of managing the scripts was much improved from last year. Continued refinement of deadlines, scope of responsibility, and management of late changes is encouraged.
- Perhaps the biggest new development was creating a regalia loan program, including the logistics and system set-up, along with securing storage in the wardrobe area for the Theater program. The chair worked with the Provost's office to purchase a rolling garment rack and accessories and with the Speaker of the Faculty Senate (Kathy Ott Walter) to solicit robe donations from emeriti faculty. We now have ~25 sets of robes along with many hoods and caps. The sanitizing system had some malfunctions, so this may need to be revisited. Otherwise, the system worked well, with junior faculty having the option to request loaner regalia through the Faculty Senate. The chair of the committee works with UE to make sure the robes get to AUBC and then back to their storage site in the wardrobe closet managed by the Theater program.
- The committee met a few times during the spring semester to discuss updates and raise questions where there was some uncertainty. Two of these meetings were semi-spontaneous, being scheduled on short notice after several coordinators expressed that they were not sure about one or another part of the planning.

- The committee continued to use our Teams site and shared calendar for planning throughout the semester.
- Based on last year's experience, UE staff or interns (with help from the Registrar's office) handled the seating chart and GradRoll.
- The coordinators continued to handle proofing program pages, coordinating ceremony speakers and student award winners, creating pre-ceremony slides, soliciting and organizing volunteers for their ceremonies, and arranging for VIP tickets. This year food and beverages were managed centrally by UE (and funded by the Provost's Office) which was a big improvement from last year.
- The chair and UE acting director led a walkthrough for new coordinators or those who wanted a refresher. The coordinators then led their own college walkthroughs with their volunteers.
- The committee met after commencement to debrief and gather suggestions for modifications for next year. Some key highlights include:
  - No pronouns on vocalist/speaker moving forward
  - Reminding graduates about name cards and when they will need their name cards; have faculty guides remind students, but also perhaps print it on the card.
  - Having expanded time for the name pronunciation table
  - Larger colleges having graduates come on both sides of the stage and leave in the center of stage; this has been under consideration, but it is not possible with our current stage, since we don't have ramps for the middle where the grads would exit the stage
  - Letting graduates know the approximately length of ceremony before the event
  - COE/SPCE/US would like the option to have up to three speakers next year, though they would stick to less than 10 minutes total for speeches
  - Stanchions so that graduates do not go in front of stage instead of a person standing there
  - Planning for when CHBS will have to be split up because it outgrows AUBC
  - Less staffing needed for some of the smaller ceremonies
  - Possibility of changing format with larger ceremonies at the start of the day
  - Feedback from staff working all day – everyone was drained by the end of the day
  - Consider working on program through an in-person meeting with each college rather than doing it all through email and Teams.
- The chair worked with UE leadership to proposed different possible schedule for next May's commencement. Those are still under consideration by Senior Leadership.

#### **Future Work Planned:**

- The chair has met with University Events to produce a list of recommendations for the May 2024 ceremonies; UE will share those with relevant stakeholders and decision-makers.
- We will need to adjust next year to new name readers. The plan is to have two readers, which will have implications for how we manage the pronunciation table.
- The committee leadership will be changing next year, as Michele White (Registrar) and Audrey Burnett (University Programs) take over as co-chairs.