



## The Committee on Ceremonial Occasions

A Standing Committee of the Faculty Senate  
Queensborough Community College  
The City University of New York

June 24, 2009

**To:** Professor Devin Felman McKay, Secretary, Academic Steering Committee

**From:** Vicki Kasomenakis, Chair, Cristina Suzuki, Co-Chair, and  
Margot Edlin, Secretary, Committee on Ceremonial Occasions (COCO)

**Re:** 2008-2009 Annual Report of the Committee on Ceremonial Occasions

Dear Professor McKay,

Please include the attached report in the Academic Senate Agenda you are preparing for the next Senate meeting.

Thank you,

Professor Kasomenakis  
Professor Suzuki  
Professor Edlin

Cc. Professor Mike Cesarano, Chair, Committee on Committees  
Professor Emily Tai, Chair, Academic Steering Committee



## The Committee on Ceremonial Occasions

A Standing Committee of the Faculty Senate  
Queensborough Community College  
The City University of New York

### 2008-2009 Annual Report

**June 8, 2009**

#### **1. Committee on Ceremonial Occasions – Meetings and Membership**

The Committee on Ceremonial Occasions held official meetings three times during the 2008-2009 academic year (8/27/08, 10/30/08, 2/20/09). In addition, we had numerous informal conversations (both in person and via e-mail) on topics regarding the committee.

The 2008-2009 Committee was composed of the following members:

<b>Committee Member</b>	<b>Department</b>
Vicki Kasomenakis, Chair	Business
Cristina Suzuki, Co-Chair	Mathematics
Margo Edlin, Secretary	Basic Education Skills

The representatives from the Student Government Association was Evelyn Gonzales and Eva Santos-Tejada.

The Administration was represented by Millie Conte, Executive Assistant to the President, and Ellen F. Hartigan, Vice President for Student Affairs, is the Presidential Designee to the Committee.

#### **2. Committee on Ceremonial Occasions- 2008-2009 Activities Summary**

The Committee on Ceremonial Occasions consists of three (3) members of the instructional staff and one (1) student.

The basic role for the Committee members is three-fold. First, they are to act as observers during Commencement Exercises. Areas of observation include various staging areas and under the tent. The members are to keep track of activities in need of improvement and those parts of the ceremony that seem to be going well. Second, they are to be available as support staff should any potential emergencies come up. Third, an annual observation report is to be created for the previous year's graduation ceremony. The report is to be presented and reviewed to the Administration during the Committee's first meeting of each academic year. In addition, the annual observation report is to be posted on the college website for review and suggestions by the college community.

In order to fulfill the obligations of the Committee, members are assigned various locations at different times before, during, and after the ceremony. They are to record their observations, discuss their findings with other Committee members and at a later date compile a report that contain the most significant observations, list potential areas needing improvements, and provide detail to any supporting role they served during the course of the ceremony.

The first official meeting (8/27/08) was an emergency meeting called at the request of the President. As reported by Millie Conte, Executive Assistant to President Marti, there was an issue regarding the scheduling of Commencement 2009. Commencement usually takes place on the last Friday in May or the first Friday of June. However, the 2009 Commencement presented an issue due to the fact that the Jewish Holiday Shavuot takes place on Friday, May 29, 2009. The President expressed a desire to consider moving the ceremony from its traditionally scheduled date as there may be graduates, faculty, and staff who celebrate this holiday. There was discussion on the pros and cons of holding graduation on Friday, June 6, 2009, Sunday, May 31, 2009 and Friday, June 6, 2009. In addition, a vote to elect a Chair, Co-Chair, and secretary of the new Committee was held. Vicki Kasomenakis was elected as Chair, Cristina Suzuki was elected as Co-Chair, and Margot Edlin as Secretary.

The second official meeting (10/30/08) was primarily focused on the review and discussion of the Commencement 2008 Observation Report. In addition, the Committee made suggestions regarding the Commencement Guide. The suggestions included the following:

- (a) One of the following options is recommended:
  - Place important telephone numbers of the college and academic telephone numbers on the same page or
  - Place important telephone numbers of the college and academic telephone numbers on separate pages near each other in the guide.
- (b) On a detachable page, place travel directions that can be used by friends and family members who may need directions to the college when attending the graduation ceremony.
- (c) Include more colorful photos in the guide of the college campus, besides pictures of the graduates. In addition, as the college's individuality is defined by the QCC tiger logo, placing such an identifying statement on the guide would make it unique.

Have an isolated page towards the end of the guide as a reminder highlighting what graduates must do in order to attend the commencement exercises.

The final official meeting (2/9/09) of the year concluded with the proposal of a Student Choice Award for the best faculty member. Chairperson Kasomenakis presented a plan outlining and instituting the award. The plan was also presented to Student Government and it was agreed that they would carry out the plan.

The Commencement Exercises were held on Friday, June 5, 2009.

**(3) Committee on Ceremonial Occasions 2009-2010 Committee Membership**

<b>Committee Member</b>	<b>Department</b>
Vicki Kasomenakis, Chair	Business
Vacant, Co-Chair	
Vacant, Secretary	

**(4) Committee on Ceremonial Occasions - Summary of observations and recommendations of Commencement Exercises - 2009**

Upon consulting with Committee members, we have included the following excerpts from The Committee on Ceremonial Occasions Observation Notes – “09” (see page 7).

Communication - picking up regalia for faculty and staff members

Observations:

- Lack of communication for picking up regalia and uncertainty regarding faculty luncheon.

Recommendations:

- Send out emails and notices numerous times to remind faculty and staff about the manner in which to proceed.

The Kupferberg Holocaust Center - roping area for faculty and staff

Observations:

- Confusion regarding the distribution of regalia.
- There were no signs or attendants to direct faculty and staff to pick up caps and gowns and to locate the rest rooms.

- Refreshments and gown distribution were in different locations of the Center.
- Faculty and staff members left as soon as regalia was picked up and had to be gathered again to march, causing delays.

Recommendations:

- Faculty and staff members need to be specifically reminded numerous times with regard to picking up regalia and when and where to gather to march.
- Refreshments and the distribution of caps and gowns should be located in one centralized room.
- There should be signs or an attendant at the front desk of the Holocaust Center to direct faculty and staff where to pick up regalia and to locate the restrooms.

Quad - directing graduates and guests to the ceremony

Observations:

- Lack of signs on campus to direct students and guests on the various aspects regarding the ceremony.

Recommendations:

- More noticeable signs should be posted campus wide instructing people where to go.
- An “informational table” should be placed and staffed with a volunteer or employee to advise people to go to the appropriate locations.
- Post a banner in front of the Administration building congratulating the students.

Science building – staging area for graduates

Observations:

- Difficult to hear VP Hartigan giving instructions to graduates in the lecture halls
- Difficult to hear VP Hartigan giving instructions to graduates in the science lobby to proceed to the tent.
- Additional signs need to be posted on the doors of the lecture halls to direct graduates by degree program.
- Graduates in wheel chairs were unable to gain access to room M136.
- Guests were entering the science lobby even though the area was restricted to graduates only.
- There were no staff members to assist those students who arrived late to the science lobby.
- Electronic billboard didn't have any congratulatory message for the graduates.

Recommendations:

- Use of microphone in the lecture halls should be available so that graduates can clearly hear the instructions given by VP Hartigan.
  - Use of megaphone in the science lobby should be available so that graduates can clearly hear the instructions given by VP Hartigan.
  - Additional signs need to be posted on lecture hall doors to direct graduates by degree programs.
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- A staff member should be assigned to those students who are wheel chair bound to assist them in navigating through the ceremony process since room M136 is inaccessible for these students.
  - Have signs posted to restrict guests from entering the science lobby.
  - Have staff members on hand to assist graduates that arrive late.
  - A message should be programmed to the electronic billboard congratulating the graduates.
  - Place trash can near the vending machines and provide additional trash cans outside the science lobby.

#### Inside the tent

##### Observations:

- Inside of tent was dry and somewhat comfortable.
- The grounds were dry.
- Seating areas at the edges were wet due to the rain and as a result two rows of seating were lost.
- Many people were standing in the aisle causing a potential hazard.
- Chaotic nature of the procession out of the tent.

##### Recommendations:

- Flaps can be ordered with the tent in the event of poor weather conditions to protect seating and guests.
- Have more staff members to direct the procession out of the tent.

#### Track and field area – faculty and student reception after the ceremony

##### Observations:

- Grounds were wet and muddy due to the rain and many graduates and guests were reluctant to meet with faculty and get refreshments after the ceremony.

##### Recommendations:

- Tents can be set up on the track and field for each department to provide shelter

to encourage graduates and their guests to meet and greet faculty members regardless of the weather conditions.

### The Ceremony

#### Observations:

- Impressive
- Well organized
- Ended on a timely basis

#### Recommendations:

- None

### Public Safety

#### Observations:

- Very professional
- Well organized

#### Recommendations:

- None

Respectfully Submitted,

Professor Kasomenakis, Chair  
Professor Suzuki, Co-Chair  
Professor Edlin, Secretary  
The Committee on Ceremonial Occasions  
2008-2009

***The Committee on Ceremonial Occasions Observation Notes – “09”***

**Communication - picking up regalia for faculty and staff members**

There appeared to be lack of communication about the venue for picking up caps and gowns, as well as whether or not there would be a faculty luncheon. E-mails need to be sent and/or notices placed in faculty/staff mail boxes to remind people about these things and also how to proceed

**The Kupferberg Holocaust Center - roping area for faculty and staff**

There was some initial confusion during the distribution of regalia in The Kupferberg Holocaust Center. There were no signs or attendant at the front desk to direct faculty where to get the gowns and to locate the restrooms. There were not enough places for faculty to sit and enjoy the refreshments that were provided. The gowns had to be picked up in a separate room in the Center, which initially seemed awkward. Many faculty members left and had to be gathered again to march. The layout of the building made lining up faculty a difficult task and it was hard to be heard at the end of the line.

The lack of familiarity with the new gathering place made faculty a bit late to march. This was exacerbated by the rainy weather conditions. Faculty and staff need to be informed, perhaps numerous times with regards to instructions on the pick up of regalia and for gathering to march. In addition, we recommend that the distribution of gowns and refreshments be located in one centralized room of The Kupferberg Holocaust Center as to make it more conducive for faculty and staff to expeditiously pick up their regalia and at the same time enjoy having refreshments with other fellow faculty and staff members.

**Quad - directing graduates and guests to the ceremony**

There was lack of signs on campus regarding the location of various aspects of the ceremony (parking, gathering of graduates and guests, ceremony, etc.). Many students and guests were observed to be wondering around lost and asking for directions. It is highly recommended that more signs be posted throughout campus directing people to the proper places. In addition, a small “informational table” (staffed with a student volunteer or staff member) should be placed in front of the Administration building to advise people to go to the appropriate locations. Also it would be a nice gesture to have a banner posted in front of the Administration building congratulating the students.



### **Science building – staging area for graduates**

The assembly of graduates by degree program in the designated lecture halls was well coordinated and marshals reported to their assigned rooms on time. VP Hartigan did an effective job of telling students what to do and what to expect during the ceremony. However, at times it became difficult to hear VP Hartigan giving instructions to the students in the lecture halls. Use of a microphone would have been very helpful to project her voice effortlessly. In addition, when all of the students started gathering in the science lobby to get ready to march towards the tent, it became difficult to hear VP Hartigan giving instructions to proceed. Perhaps a megaphone would be helpful so as not to strain her voice.

Additional signs needed to be posted on the doors of the lecture halls to direct graduates by degree programs. Even though we did observe signs on the doors, it was difficult to view them since the signs were placed on the doors that were propped open.

It was difficult for students that were wheel chair bound to have access to room M136 to receive instructions regarding the ceremony. It seemed that these students appeared to be a bit lost and confused. A staff member should be assigned to these students to help them navigate through the ceremony process.

While additional staffing of the tables where degree candidates registered and received their yellow cards, we observed guests entering the science lobby. Signs should be posted to restrict the science lobby to graduates only. In addition, numerous graduates arrived after all other students left to attend the ceremony. There was no staff members left behind to assist these graduates regarding the ceremony. We highly recommend that a few staff members remain behind to assist those graduates that arrive late as circumstances do occur that can impede their prompt arrival (i.e. poor weather conditions, car problems, delays in public transportation, etc.).

Also, the electronic sign at the entrance to the science building courtyard should have had a congratulatory message programmed for the graduates to capture the spirit of the day and to inform students that the science lobby was the primary point for assembly of the graduates. There were no trash cans by the vending machines in the science lobby and the space outside in front of the lobby had two trash cans hidden in the back.

### **Inside the tent**

The tent area for the most part was very well done and was kept as comfortable as possible given the rainy weather conditions. It looked nice, kept the ground very dry under the circumstances and provided adequate protection from the elements. Buildings and Grounds are to be commended for their work. However, the biggest problem was the seating areas at the edges of the tent. Due to driving rain and the dripping of rain off the sides of the tent, two rows of seating were lost because they were wet. This forced people to stand, many times in the aisle. This blocked egress out of the tent and could potentially have been dangerous. Also, as the ceremony is long, people were uncomfortable having to stand for the entire time. Perhaps side flaps can be ordered with the tent in the event of inclement weather to protect seating and the guests. The other problem observed was the chaotic nature of the procession out of the tent. Nobody seemed to know where to go and

there appeared to be no order. As people were uncomfortable due to the weather, this may have been the cause rather than any fault on the part of those leading the procession.

### **Track and field area – faculty and student reception after the ceremony**

After the ceremony, graduates and guests were directed to meet with faculty and get cookies and a drink at the track and field area. However, not many people took part due to the rain. The grounds were very muddy making it very uncomfortable to walk especially if one was wearing high heels. Although it is difficult to prevent the grounds from becoming muddy because of the rain, perhaps tents can be set up on the track and field for each department to at least provide shelter regardless of the weather conditions. This will help to encourage people to gather so that both graduates and their guests can meet and greet the faculty members.

### **The Ceremony**

Overall, the ceremony went smoothly and was quite impressive despite the rainy weather conditions. It ended on time (approximately two hours). Millie Conte has done an exceptional job ensuring the success of the ceremony. We applaud her and all of her assistants for a job well done.

Professor Sneed's ensemble did an excellent rendition of the National Anthem. We greatly appreciate the Music Department for their support and assistance with the ceremony.

### **Public Safety**

Accolades to all of the members of the Office Security and Public Safety. Their professionalism and courtesy was most impressive. They have done a superb job to enhance the public image of the college during this most momentous event.