



The Committee on Ceremonial Occasions

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

June 14, 2010

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

From: Vicki Kasomenakis, Chair, Laura Sabani, Co-Chair, and
Eva Goldhammer, Secretary, Committee on Ceremonial Occasions (COCO)

Re: 2009-2010 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 Sabani
Professor Goldhammer

Cc. Professor Emily Tai, Chair, Academic Steering Committee



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2009-2010 Annual Report

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1. Committee on Ceremonial Occasions – Meetings and Membership

The Committee on Ceremonial Occasions held three meetings during the 2009-2010 academic year (9/22/09, 10/13/09, 4/6/10). In addition, the committee members had numerous informal conversations (both in person and via e-mail) on topics regarding the committee.

The 2009-2010 Committee was composed of the following members:

Committee Member	Department
Vicki Kasomenakis, Chair	Business
Laura Sabani, Co-Chair	Foreign Languages and Literatures
Eva Goldhammer, Secretary	Social Sciences

The representative from the Student Government Association was Ms. Cuthbert.

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

2. Committee on Ceremonial Occasions- 2009-2010 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 to 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. The report will also list potential areas needing improvements and provide detail to any supporting role they served during the course of the ceremony.

The first meeting was held on September 22, 2009. Vicki Kasomenakis was the only committee member who was returning for another year of service. She described the functions of the Committee to the new members which are essentially to oversee, supervise, and make recommendations regarding the College graduation ceremony. At this meeting, it was decided that Vicki Kasomenakis will serve as Chairperson, Laura Sabani will serve as Co-Chair and Eva Goldhammer will serve as Secretary.

The second meeting was held on October 13, 2009. The meeting was primarily focused on the review and discussion of the Commencement 2008-2009 Observation Report. In addition, the Committee made the following suggestions:

- relocating the faculty and staff graduation reception from the Student Union Building to the Oakland Dining Hall
- it was suggested that we rent additional small tents for each academic department so that faculty, students, and guests can be sheltered from various weather conditions when they meet and greet at the track and field after the ceremony
- since the number of graduates and invited guests keep growing every year, it was recommended that we rent an indoor facility in order to accommodate everyone more comfortably instead of having the graduation on campus. Possible facilities for rental that were discussed included the following:

- (1) Queens College
- (2) St. John's University
- (3) Francis Lewis High School

The final meeting was held on April 6, 2010. During the meeting, it was emphasized that only faculty and staff who have attended and participated in the commencement exercises can attend the luncheon. In addition, it was suggested that we obtain a larger tent or place tent extensions to accommodate the growing amount of attendees to the ceremony. At this meeting, each member was assigned to observe the various staging areas during the commencement exercises. The Committee members agreed to meet in front of the Administration Building in June 4, 2010 at 8:00 a.m. to conduct the observations.

(3) Committee on Ceremonial Occasions - Summary of observations and recommendations of Commencement Exercises - 2010

Upon consulting with Committee members, we have included the following excerpts from The Committee on Ceremonial Occasions Observation Notes – “10” (see page 8).

Communication - picking up regalia for faculty and staff members

Observations:

- there was some confusion as to where to pick regalia. In addition, there was some uncertainty regarding the faculty and staff luncheon

Recommendations:

- send out numerous emails and/or notices to remind faculty and staff members about the manner in which to proceed

The Kupferberg Holocaust Center - roping area for faculty and staff

Observations:

- confusion regarding where to pick up regalia
- there were no signs or attendant at the front desk to direct faculty and staff to pick up caps and gowns and to locate the rest rooms
- many faculty and staff members left as soon as regalia was picked up and had to be gathered again to march, causing slight delays
- there weren't enough benches for faculty and staff members to sit and enjoy the refreshments that were made available at the center
- water bottles were in very short supply and were never replenished

Recommendations:

- faculty and staff members need to be specifically reminded numerous times with regards to picking up regalia and when and where to gather to march.
- there should be signs and attendant at the front desk of the Kupferberg Holocaust Center to direct faculty and staff where to pick up regalia and to locate the restrooms
- the refreshment table should be placed against the wall so that enough room is made available to place 3-4 benches across from the refreshment table

Quad - directing graduates and guests to the ceremony

Observations:

- lack of signs on campus to direct students and guests to the various staging areas of the ceremony

Recommendations:

- more noticeable signs should be posted campus wide instructing people where to go
- numerous information tables should be centrally located on campus (i.e. in front of the Administration building and in front of the Humanities building) and should be staffed with either a volunteer or employee to direct people to the various staging areas
- post a banner in front of the Administration building congratulating the graduates

Science building – staging area for graduates

Observations:

- small signs were posted on the doors of the lecture halls to direct graduates by degree program

Recommendations:

- numerous and larger signs need to be posted on lecture hall doors to direct graduates by degree programs

Inside the tent

Observations:

- the tent inside was dry and somewhat warm
- many people were standing outside the tent because there weren't enough seats to accommodate them

Recommendations:

- more seats for guests are needed and there should be an attendant in charge to escort guests to their seats during the ceremony
- more fans are needed under the tent especially where the graduates, faculty and staff are seated

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

Observations:

- the grounds at the track and field were dry
- weather conditions were sunny and warm

Recommendations:

- tents should be set up on the track and field for each academic department to provide shade from the blaring sun and heat

The Ceremony

Observations:

- Impressive
- Well organized
- Ended on a timely basis

Recommendations:

- None

Public Safety

Observations:

- Very professional
- Well organized

Recommendations:

- None

Respectfully Submitted,

Vicki Kasomenakis, Chair
Laura Sabani, Co-Chair
Eva Goldhammer, Secretary
The Committee on Ceremonial Occasions
2009-2010

The Committee on Ceremonial Occasions Observation Notes – “10”

Communication - picking up regalia for faculty and staff members

There seemed to be some confusion about the venue for picking regalia as well as whether or not there would be a faculty and staff luncheon after the ceremony. It's recommended that numerous emails and/or notices be sent out to faculty and staff members reminding them about these events and how to proceed.

The Kupferberg Holocaust Center - roping area for faculty and staff

A number of faculty and staff members weren't sure where to pick up their caps and gowns in the Kupferberg Holocaust Center. As in the previous year, there were no signs or attendant(s) at the front desk to direct attendees to pick up their regalia and to locate the restrooms. In addition, there weren't enough benches for the members to sit and enjoy the refreshments that were provided. There was a very short supply of water bottles at the refreshment table. Many requests were made for more water. Unfortunately, there was no attendant to replenish the supply.

Quad - directing graduates and guests to the ceremony

As in the previous year, there was lack of signs on campus regarding the location of the various staging areas of the ceremony. We observed students and guests wondering around the campus and asking for directions. We recommend that more signs be posted throughout the campus to direct people to the various staging areas. We did observe one attendant in front of the Administration building directing students and guests to the various staging area which was somewhat helpful. Unfortunately, the attendant appeared to be very uncomfortable because she was standing unprotected in the blaring sun. We highly recommend that an informational table and chair be placed in a shaded area near the Administration building and the same be placed in front of the Humanities building so that the attendant is sheltered from the sun and be more comfortable.

Science building – staging area for graduates

The assembly of graduates by degree program in the designated lecture halls was very well coordinated and marshals reported to their assigned rooms on time. Ellen Hartigan did an effective job of telling students what to do and what to expect during the ceremony. This year we observed that staff members were left behind to accommodate and direct graduates that arrived late. There were numerous requests made by graduates for safety and bobby pins. It's recommended that a supply be kept at the registration table.

Processional

Students from different program degrees marched in a coordinated way and were re-woven into one row just beautifully. However, as the several groups came together at the entrance of the track and field, a slight bottleneck slowed down progress. It cleared as the graduates marched through the track and field to the tent. However, another bottle neck was created as students were seated. We recommend that students march in separate groups according to specific degree program all the way to the tent. They can then enter at three different locations, where three sets of seats will have been reserved for them. This way all three groups can go through the process of being seated simultaneously, and it would expedite the seating arrangements for the graduates.

Inside the tent

The tent area was very well done and was kept as comfortable as possible given the very warm and sunny weather conditions. There were numerous fans located around the area where the degrees were being conferred which helped to cool off that particular area. We observed many guests using hand held fans to cool off and heard many people complaining of how warm it was inside the tent. We recommend that more fans be placed throughout the tent to help cool off other areas as well. In addition, we noticed many guests standing outside the tent in the sweltering heat. We are not quite sure if they were choosing to stand to get a view of the activities at the podium. However, there were plenty of unfilled seats behind the faculty but there wasn't any attendant to escort people to be seated. Should guests want to stand, perhaps a large screen viewer as used at sporting stadiums can be installed so guests can get a better view of the ceremonial activities.

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

After the ceremony, all of the graduates and their guests were directed to meet and greet the faculty members at the designed academic departmental areas located on the track and field. We noticed that not many people took part due to the heat and blaring sun. We recommend if it's feasible and economical to either rent or buy small tents for each academic department in order to provide shelter regardless of the weather conditions. This will help to encourage more people to gather so that both graduates and their guests can meet up with their professors after the ceremony.

The Ceremony

Overall, the ceremony went smoothly and was quite impressive. It ended on time (approximately two hours). Ellen Hartigan and Millie Conte have done an exceptional job ensuring the success of the ceremony. We applaud them and all of their assistants for doing such an incredible job.

Susan Agin, Managing and Artistic Director of the Queensborough Performing Arts Center did an excellent rendition of the National Anthem. Our praise to the Royal Brass for doing such a wonderful job in providing the music for the Commencement 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 memorable event.

Buildings and Grounds

The staff members of the Buildings and Grounds have done a most impressive job with beautifying the campus with the most colorful flowers and nicely manicured grounds. In addition, they have done an exceptional job in setting up the tent at the track and field for the graduation ceremony. Bravo to everyone that participated. Your hard work and dedication is greatly appreciated.