

Queensborough Community College  
The City University of New York

**The Committee on Ceremonial Occasions**  
A Standing Committee of the Academic Senate

**TO:** Professor Kathleen Villani, Secretary, Steering Committee  
**FROM:** Holly O’Donnell and Shannon Kincaid, Co-Chairs,  
Committee on Ceremonial Occasions (COCO)  
**SUBJECT:** Re: 2005-2006 Annual Report of the Committee on Ceremonial Occasions  
**DATE:** September 21, 2006

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

The Committee on Ceremonial Occasions held official meetings five times during the 2005-2006 academic year (10/26/2005, 12/7/2005, 3/1/2006, 3/29/2006, and 5/24/2006).

The 2005-2006 Committee was composed of the following members:

<u>Committee Member</u>	<u>Department</u>
Shannon Kincaid, Co-Chair	Social Sciences
Holly O’Donnell, Co-Chair	Basic Skills
Heather Dougherty	Health, Physical Education, and Dance
Margaret Mikowski	Nursing
Suzy Sciammarella	Library
Jun H. Shin	Chemistry

The representative from the Student Government Association was Alithia Gomez.

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

**2. Committee on Ceremonial Occasions – 2005-2006 Activities Summary**

This was a transitional year for the Committee on Ceremonial Occasions. Traditionally, the committee had been charged with the “planning and implementation” of commencement. However, as of the Fall Semester in 2005, the Academic Senate voted to change the by-laws charge of the committee. Instead of planning and implementing the ceremony, the committee now functions primarily as an advisory body, with the task of implementation now borne by the President’s office and the Department for Student Affairs. Starting with the 2006-2007 academic year, the Senate also voted to reduce the number of committee members from six to three.

At the beginning of the year, there was much discussion and debate on several issues. First, both the committee and the administration agreed that the tent used in the previous year's ceremony received favorable reviews from everyone, and that the use of such a structure (barring significant changes to the ceremony) should become a permanent part of commencement. Yet, it was also agreed that the size of the previous year's tent was insufficient, and there was much discussion concerning the orientation of the tent on the field, as well as the arrangement (and height) of the stage, ramps, and seating.

A common theme throughout the meetings was the need to keep the ceremony as brief as possible, and we discussed ways to reduce (or sometimes eliminate) the length of commencement. All agreed the reading of the graduate's names is an integral part of the Queensborough graduation, but issues regarding the time given to speakers needed to be addressed. It was also decided that for efficiency, instead of designating each marshal as a name reader, we would ask a core group of faculty to act as official "readers."

Perhaps one of the most significant issues to arise in the course of our meetings was the desire, expressed by the administration, to consider eliminating the commencement rehearsal. This was a controversial issue. Some faculty outside the committee expressed serious reservations, both about the loss of a "practice session" and a sustained opportunity to review name pronunciation, as well as the opportunity to spend time with the graduates.

These concerns were addressed in several ways: It was decided that graduates be assigned to lecture halls according to their degree programs. The actual time of the ceremony was pushed back, allowing more time for check-in and orientation. The issue of name pronunciation was resolved through the use of cards, provided by the photographer, with space for a pronunciation key, and volunteers to assist students.

The primary concern of the committee regarding the elimination of rehearsal was the fact that students would be coming to the ceremony without adequate information on where to go and what to expect. It was agreed that a graduation "guide" was needed, and we consulted on the types of information to be provided.

Other issues considered were: faculty recognition awards, selection of marshals, faculty attendance, selection of musical performers, and the new post-ceremony departmental receptions. The Department of Music provided invaluable support to the committee in the selection of performers, and the ensemble led by Professor Damien Sneed deserves our special thanks for their wonderful performance. Alumni participation was discussed with the Director of Alumni Affairs. Finally, the co-chairpersons were consulted by the President of the College on an issue concerning the scheduled date of the ceremony.

The final meeting of the year dealt with final logistical planning, and a review of faculty volunteer duties. Commencement was held on Friday, June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2006.

### 3. Committee on Ceremonial Occasions – 2006-2007 Committee Membership

The 2006-2007 Committee members, as designated by Academic Senate’s Committee on Committees (Mike Cesarano, Chair) are:

<u>Member</u>	<u>Department</u>	<u>Office</u>
Shannon Kincaid	Social Sciences	Co-Chair
Holly O’Donnell	Basic Skills	Co-Chair
Susan Sciammarella	Library	Secretary

### 4. Committee on Ceremonial Occasions - Recommendations

After consulting with various members of the faculty, staff, and administration at the college, the committee proposes future discussions regarding the following topics:

- Lighting under the tent
- Commencement Guide
- Some student confusion regarding card distribution
- The need for additional loudspeakers
- Additional seating
- Contingency planning for inclement weather