

To: Members of Commencement Committee
From: Mr. Leigh

Bennington College
November 22, 1935

Suggestions for Commencement

I. Date of Commencement.

- A. Last week of College ending Thursday noon.
- B. Last week in May (May 29-30 in 1936): to avoid unpleasantly warm weather and end-of-year weariness; Seniors to be in residence for free period after graduation--3 or 4 week period.

II. Presentation of Student and Senior Work.

- A. Series of afternoon and evening meetings during last week in June, or last week in May.
 - 1. Exhibits of student work in art, science, social studies, literature, student records, during whole period, especially first morning.
 - 2. Literature reading, social studies symposium, science demonstration, afternoons.
 - 3. Music, dance, drama workshop programs, 2 evenings.

III. Ceremony of Graduation.

- A. Informal ceremony similar to community meetings and as part of programs of student work, 2nd evening, consisting of appropriate remarks and presentation of seniors for degree by faculty and award of degrees by president and trustees--no special costumes or music. Idea of ceremony to be inconspicuous part of general two days' program and similar in spirit to informal evening and community meetings already a natural part of Bennington College life.
- B. Formal, brief ceremony at silo base, 2nd afternoon, evening or last forenoon of College. Processional from northwest door of Barn; music by College quartet; possibly choral music; presentation of seniors in divisions by faculty of divisions to the president; presentation by president to chairman of the Board of Trustees; award of degree by chairman of Board; as part of ceremony, formal remarks by chairman of faculty divisions, president and chairman of the Board.

Costumes: traditional academic costume worn by trustees, faculty and seniors, or by participants in ceremony only--chairman Board of Trustees, president, chairmen faculty divisions and seniors. Possibility of special costume for seniors.

Report on cost of renting regular and special costumes--Mrs. Lauterer.

Idea of ceremony based on fact that giving of A.B. degree is a formal recognition of relation of Bennington College to general academic world, that ceremony of award of degree should similarly indicate this relationship, adapting the ceremony to Bennington situation and eliminating undesirable and unattractive features of commencement exercises.

IV. Guests for Commencement Period.

- A. All of College Community and Trustees.
- B. Parents of seniors.
- C. Supporters and friends of the College?
- D. Entertainment of guests: formal invitations.

V. Fundamental principles.

- A. Expense to seniors, parents, College.
- B. Time and energy of College Community.
- C. Value of type of ceremony in which students, faculty, trustees, parents can spontaneously and enthusiastically participate and cooperate.

Note on Academic Costume

I. Present Trustees.

5 have advanced degrees; 6 have bachelor's degrees; 4 have no academic degrees.

II. Faculty.

19 have advanced degrees; 15 have bachelor's degrees; 11 have no academic degrees (all in art, music, drama).

III. If academic costume is worn by active participants only, all have academic degrees: Chairman Board of Trustees, President, representatives of each Division.