

Commencement (Plans; September 1935)

Suggestions Made at a Meeting of the Committee Held September 26, 1935.

Members of the Commencement Committee:	Mr. Brockway	Ruth Bailey
	Mr. Jones	Louisa Richardson
	Mrs. Lauterer	Margaret Suter

A. Starting with the fact that there is already established by custom a last community meeting, the Committee explored various possibilities for an appropriate recognition of the graduation of the Senior class from College.

B. The Committee agreed unanimously that two fundamental factors should be kept in mind in all plans for the end of the year:

1. That so far as possible no plans for Commencement should involve the parents, students or the College in any considerable extra expense. In connection with expenditure it was agreed that not only should the official expenditures be kept at a minimum but that there should be an effective prevention of the growth of any such customs as giving of presents, flowers, etc.

2. That in all plans care should be taken to keep at a minimum any extra expenditure of time or energy on the part of students, faculty or staff.

C. The following suggestions were discussed by the Committee:

1. Simple ceremony on last morning of College. A simple ceremony at the base of the silo Thursday before luncheon to symbolize the graduation of the students: i.e., to give public recognition to the realities of their having met the requirements and having been awarded the degree. There seemed to be agreement that on this occasion there be no "regulation" Commencement speech or speaker dealing with an independent and unrelated topic. It was suggested that there might be as a part of the ceremony formal remarks by members conducting the ceremony limited to two or three minutes each which would be constituent parts of the ceremony itself.

The silo base itself might be occupied by the person presiding at the ceremony such as the chairman of the Board of Trustees, the President, and/or some student or faculty member selected for the purpose. There might be reserved seats for all who wish including seats reserved for students and especially for the Senior class.

~~It~~ It was suggested that the diploma itself be not actually handed out as a part of the ceremony but given out in another connection as, for instance, at luncheon or merely put in the mail boxes.

~~The~~ The ceremony itself might be largely that of having a representative of the faculty from each division or major present the names of the candidates for the degree as voted by the division and the faculty, and to have these awarded the degree by the authority of the Trustees in groups by divisions or majors. It seemed to be agreed that there should be no individual awarding of diplomas or any sort of individual singling out of students which would lead to competitive applause.

One suggestion and point of view was that the faculty and students need wear no special dress. This would imply no procession to the ceremony or away from it. We might provide that the chairman of the Board of Trustees, the President and the individual members of the faculty representing divisions, wear the customary academic costume.

It was suggested that under no circumstances would the ceremony last longer than a half hour. Being held out of doors it should not be hot or tiresome. It was generally agreed that simplicity and dignity be maintained and that traditional features of the ceremony which interfere with this should be so far as possible prevented. A good precedent for this ceremony was the ground-breaking held in 1931 which did maintain simplicity, brevity and dignity and made a very favorable impression.

2. Another suggestion was that in connection with the ceremony there be a procession, at least of the students, from the student houses and perhaps the faculty from the Commons Building to the silo base and that special costume be worn. It was suggested that there be prepared a special cap and hood going back to the earlier academic costumes before they were standardized in America in a way which resulted in a very unattractive dress for women. It was thought that the expense factor could be saved by having a type of cap and hood that some students would wish to purchase for permanent use, and that others could be made a part of the stock of the Cooperative Store and loaned each year to the students at a very low rental. It was suggested that the faculty, Trustees and others might wear the regular academic costume or that the women members of the faculty without regular costume could wear the student type of revised academic costume. It was thought that if Mrs. Lauterer's students make a very successful cap and hood for academic purposes which might be actually handled by the Store it might in time be used by other institutions.

The question of whether some of the students would wish to exempt themselves from participation in this final ceremony was brought up. Some thought that it should be entirely voluntary. Another point of view was that since so little was required by the College by way of universal cooperation that it would not be too much to ask for universal participation on the part of the seniors.

A band was suggested as an important feature of a good procession but no suggestions were made which would keep the cost of a band for this purpose within reasonable limits.

3. Suggestions were made for special use of the last week of the College. There was a definite suggestion of the revival of the medieval university custom of a banquet or party given by the seniors for the faculty. This is not to be further discussed since the seniors wish to keep it completely in their own hands and nothing needs to be said except providing a time for it. It might be examined from the point of view of the use of time and energy and expense.

4. It was also suggested that at evening meetings of the last week allowance be made for the special programs in which in some cases seniors would take part and in which in later years graduates might return to take part. The idea of having a meeting for each of the four or five divisions each year would be avoided but where in a division

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there is the possibility of a good program such as a music program in which the graduating class along with others take part, drama-dance program, literature program or social science program, these should be held. They would be kept within the limits of simplicity of the evening meetings but they would gradually take on an important character. They would cost no money. They would not involve the students or faculty in extra time and energy over and above normal participation on the type of evening meeting which we have had and in which students and faculty participate. Parents, of course, and other friends of the College who might wish to come early, might attend these meetings.

If the College Trustees should decide to give honorary degrees, an evening meeting at which such a distinguished visitor would speak, might be held. In other words, the five last evenings of the College might very well all be taken up with evening meetings but they should remain for flexible arrangement at least at the present stage. They would have to be planned formonths ahead only in the sense that a particular musical program or literature program in which students and faculty participate would be placed at that time rather than earlier. It was suggested that the five last days be an occasion for an art exhibit of students and the work of seniors and members of the faculty.

Since the meeting, the suggestion has occurred that any expenses connected with Commencement might be met by admission to the last group of evening meetings or to one of them.

It was agreed that since some parents would be here for more than one day and a great many for the last day the regular organization for their entertainment would have to be developed. In the past the College has entertained a great many visitors, such as at the ground-breaking ceremony, and the staff organization can handle it with the cooperation of the Trustees and students. A special organization of teas might in this case relieve the faculty members from interference with the regular work of the College.

5. An actual form for a diploma has been worked out and was submitted to the Committee. It is a simple, inexpensive, engraved diploma on cardboard which can be obtained for 1/20 of the usual cost of expensive sheepskin diplomas, and the expense can be met from general College funds.

It was agreed that these various suggestions should be taken in their present tentative form to two meetings, one of the Committee with the senior class, and one with the faculty, for their discussion, criticism and elaboration, after which the Committee will meet again.

The general point of view which seemed to gain most acceptance as discussion in the Committee proceeded, was that there should be no attempt to create a novel Commencement in contrast with, and portest against, the usual college commencement; that on the other hand, the usual college commencement form applies in no realistic sense to the Bemington College situation. The effort is, therefore, to develop in the last days of the College the kind of ceremonial which symbolizes graduation from this particular institution as well as symbolizing the fact that this institution is a part of the larger academic community the world over.