

# The Committee on Ceremonial Occasions

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

Holly O'Donnell  
Shannon Kincaid  
Co-Chairs

September 27, 2007

To: Professor Devin McKay, Secretary,  
Academic Steering Committee

From: Holly O'Donnell and Shannon Kincaid, Co-Chairs  
Committee on Ceremonial Occasions (COCO)

Re: 2006-2007 Annual Report of the Committee on Ceremonial Occasions

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

The Committee on Ceremonial Occasions held official meetings three times during the 2006-2007 academic year (10/11/06, 2/21/07, 4/25/07).

The 2006-2007 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 Educational Skills
Suzy Sciammarella	Library

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 – 2006-2007 Activities Summary

2006-2007 was, in some respects, another year of transition for the Committee on Ceremonial Occasions. Working in an advisory capacity, members assisted the President's office and the Department for Student Affairs in planning the 2007 commencement ceremony. Although commencement has traditionally been the focus of the committee's work, questions arose regarding the possibility of the committee playing an advisory role in the planning of other ceremonial events held by the college. It was suggested by the Senate Parliamentarian and the Chair of the Academic Senate Steering Committee that the Committee on Ceremonial Occasions send a resolution to the Academic Senate recommending that commencement be made an official college ceremony. Since only official college ceremonies fall under the jurisdiction of CoCO, graduation would then continue to be the committee's focus.

Strategies for fine-tuning the previous year's ceremony were the primary focus of the committee meetings. Because the use of the tent has been so successful over the last several years, the committee and the administration again reiterated their commitment to ensuring that it remains a permanent part of commencement. Other committee recommendations that were discussed and agreed upon included the installation of additional lighting both on the stage and under the tent, the use of loudspeakers along the path to the tent, and an increase in seating capacity. Additionally, it was decided that detailed seating charts should be included in the graduation guide so that graduates and their guests could familiarize themselves with the arrangement in advance. Ways to make the distribution of cards on graduation morning more efficient were also discussed. One particularly useful strategy that emerged from our dialogue was the use of additional registration stations and "managers" in the lecture halls in which the students gather immediately before the ceremony. In the spirit of increasing efficiency, it was also decided that the faculty readers (i.e. those who announce each graduate as he or she approaches the stage) would no longer be located on the stage; rather, they would stand at a podium placed next to the stage near the entrance ramp, thereby allowing for easier card exchange between the students and their faculty reader.

Additional issues that were discussed were the desire for the continued involvement of the Music Department and its student vocalists, the roles of the on and off-campus vendors, and the success of the post-ceremony gathering areas, divided up into the various academic departments, which allow for students and their families to meet with faculty members.

The committee also met with the President of the College to discuss the selection of the 2006 Commencement Speaker as well as possible future speakers.

During the final meeting of the year, it was decided that the most fruitful role for the committee members on graduation day would be that of commencement "observers." Having the opportunity to observe the students, faculty, staff, and the under-the-tent staging areas would permit committee members to take notice of particular aspects of

the event that might require future modification; it would also allow them to be available to assist with any problems or concerns that might arise.

Commencement was held on Friday, June 1, 2007.

### 3. Committee on Ceremonial Occasions – 2007-2008 Committee Membership

The 2007-2008 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
Laura Sabani	Foreign Languages	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:

- Student Registration Area and Seating
- Time-Reduction Strategies
- Empty Rows and Student Ushers
- Commencement Guide
- Discussions with Vendors (Maintenance, Placement, etc.)

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Shannon Kincaid, Prof. Holly O’Donnell  
Co-Chairpersons  
Committee on Ceremonial Occasions  
2006-2007