QUESTION: What is the schedule for August 21 and 22?

David Beacham: We have had a group working, and you can see a slide on your screens of what we have put together so far. We are trying to compress events that didn’t get to happen earlier in the spring into this weekend. So, we are starting on Friday, August 21 with our Baccalaureate worship service led by Rev. Ron at 3 p.m. And, at 4:30 we will combine what would have been the Honors Convocation and the Phi Beta Kappa Convocation for inducting new members at 4:30. Both of those events will be in Jerry Richardson Indoor Stadium on Friday afternoon. Then at 6:30 we have a Class of 2020 Celebration that will be a social time to include plenty to eat and bring your families and we’ll hear more about that and about that location shortly. Then the next morning, on Saturday, we’ll start at 8 a.m. with the Commissioning Ceremony for ROTC in Leonard Auditorium. And then at 10 a.m. we’ll begin the Commencement exercises in Jerry Richardson Indoor Stadium. Then we’ll have the traditional Lemonade on the Lawn reception immediately following there at the Indoor Stadium.

Question: Will families and friends be allowed to attend Commencement? If so, how many guests will each graduate be allowed?

Jennifer Allison: Yes, a limited number of family and friends will be permitted to [inaudible]. Our recommendation is that only immediate family members should plan to attend in person. And at the moment we’re looking at keeping the Indoor Stadium at about 50% maximum. [inaudible] Obviously we need everyone’s cooperation to make that happen. Obviously, we want to honor the graduates but also maintain our personal distancing and probably as David mentioned and as probably the rest of us will mention repeatedly through this is that additional restrictions may be put in place. We just don’t know what the situation’s going to be quite yet in August. So obviously, we’ll monitor that and as we get closer to August, we’ll have better information and more explicit guidance.

Question: Will there be a livestream option so people who cannot attend can watch online?

Jennifer Allison: Yes, there will definitely be a livestream option. This is something that we have done for the last few years and I think that this is one of the beauties of living in this age is that if you cannot attend in person, you can still participate through the livestream. To be honest, you might have a better view of the graduates through the livestream than in person. And we would certainly recommend that anyone that is in a high-risk category for the COVID-19 participate through the livestream.

Question: Why are we doing graduation inside? Couldn’t we spread out more and do a better job of social distancing if we were outside?
David Beacham: Thanks Jo Ann, and it’s a great question. Nothing is more beautiful at Wofford than our outdoor Graduation Commencement exercises, we know that. The main reason that we are going inside is that it’s August in Spartanburg. It’s almost unfathomable to consider how hot it can be and uncomfortable, particularly when a large number of the participants in the program are wearing gowns. So, we are really mainly just trying to be sensitive to the heat and the misery. Also, one thing about being outside that we have experienced just about every time we’ve done it, our guests, in order to avoid the sun outdoors are moving chairs around all the time. So, we can control, we think, the social distancing a little bit better on the inside by having sort of restricted seating areas where there will be a little more difficult and fixed seating where that will obviously be a little more difficult. But we do not intend to forever ban outdoor graduations. This is, obviously, a most unusual and extenuating circumstance that we just felt we had to do what was for the safety and comfort of our guests.

Question: What if states close again and we cannot travel for Commencement? Is there a plan for postponing again or for a virtual event?

Mike Sosulski: It’s a good question. So, what we know about for the predictions for the pandemic and the flattening of the curve indicate to us that August still looks like a favorable time to celebrate the Class of 2020. And what I can tell you, is that we are determined to celebrate the achievements of the Class of 2020 and so if things were to change, we would certainly seek some sort of alternative way to do just that. But at this point in time we are looking to August 21 and 22 as the dates when we will celebrate the Class of 2020 in style.

Question: What safety measures will be put into place to ensure minimal risk for those who attend? Explain how the awarding the diplomas will work in this environment.

Jennifer Allison: I just want to step back to the previous question quickly and say that we haven’t set a number of family and friends that can attend for each graduate. But as I mentioned, if we can keep that to immediate family, I think that that’s going to be our best bet. Again, to follow these safety measures that we’re going to have in place as David mentioned, social distancing is going to be a primary concern. We are limiting the number of people in the stadium. We will have designated areas for families to sit with six-foot perimeter between other families. Certainly, we’re going to have to eliminate seats, rope some areas off, limit the access points to the seating. We plan to have hand sanitizer throughout the concourse and the lobby. Attendees won’t be on the floor after the ceremony, that everyone will need to exit quickly. Most likely the doors will open thirty minutes before the event. Sometimes, when we’re outdoors, people have camped out for an hour or two before the ceremony even begins. And again, kind of an evolving discussion as we get closer, we are in touch with Mr. Rucker who runs the stadium and
administers the things that happen there, and he’s certainly been helpful in this process and will continue to be. As for the diplomas, that’s going to be a little bit different this year. The Registrar’s office will begin awarding degrees next week. As the students know, grades were available on Tuesday, and we’ve given them through this Friday to select the credit/no-credit grading option for courses this semester if that’s what they want to do. And because of that, it’s delayed our processing for transcripts, degrees, diplomas, but like I said we will start awarding degrees next week. And we will mail diplomas to the students the first week of June. We wanted the students to have their actual diploma in-hand as soon as possible, which is why we decided to mail them rather than wait to distribute them in person at the event in August. So that’s what our plan is for the diplomas.

Question: How will the college manage the senior class party? Won’t serving food and beverages be difficult?

Roberta Bigger: As everyone knows, AVI is our culinary services partner and they adapted immediately in March to proper serving of food, so we are confident that the plan that we come up with for food and beverages will be safe for the seniors and their family members and guests. And, what we are planning, the tentative plan right now, we have a special committee working on the plans. They have come up with a plan to have part of the event in the Verandah lot and part of the event in the Ben Johnson arena. And so, we will have plenty of restrooms, we’ve already booked a band. The staff is getting very excited about it, and it will be fun and safe, and we can’t wait for it.

Question: How will college marshals line students up to maintain social distancing?

Lillian Gonzalez: We have a group of college marshals and staff who are always involved in graduation and junior marshals who will help us. Right now, we’re a little far out, we’re still trying to figure out details, but we’re hoping to probably line up seniors in front of Old Main where we can distance students there as they are getting ready to line up and ready to process. And we will process to the Indoor Stadium and we have received assurance from Mr. Rucker that there is space, that we can space out seating on the arena floor so that we can maintain that distancing. And it will be a matter of adjusting the timing of the seniors processing to the stage and off and back to their seat to maintain that at the recession. But we will definitely have to maintain that distancing and keep an eye on that. But we will commit to doing that.

Question: Will it be required for all professors to attend? What if a professor feels uncomfortable being at the event with so many people?
Mike Sosulski: Thanks Jo Ann. Yes, I understand the question. So, commencement is one of the most important events in the life of the college every year. And faculty are normally expected to attend commencement. However, if a specific faculty member has a personal condition that would prevent her or him from feeling comfortable attending, they should certainly speak to me about that. We want to be flexible and responsive to people’s individual circumstances.

Question: Will Commencement brochures be available to students and parents who do not return for the August event?

Jennifer Allison: Yes, we’re planning to work up the details of how we will distribute the Commencement program in an efficient way so that those that cannot attend can receive a copy. We’ve had some discussions about maybe having students RSVP if they plan to attend the event or not, how many guests they are planning on bringing. If they are not able to attend, they can indicate that they would like a program mailed to them. This is the kind of details, logistics that we’re still trying to work out and kind of get our heads around about everything that we’ll need to address through this process. And certainly, we want the students, the parents to have those items that are normally part of any commencement ceremony, whether they can be there or not.

Question: Will the Class of 2020 be allowed to stay on campus during Commencement weekend?

Roberta Bigger: Thank you for this question, it’s very important. No, at this time we have told the senior class they will not be staying on campus because we hope to be having the pre-season athletes for football, men’s and women’s soccer, and volleyball, will have already been moved into their rooms. The orientation staff will be moving in, residence life staff, and our scholar’s orientation, ROTC and the pre-law program. So, there will be a lot of students already moved into their regular rooms on campus. We have a special contract with the Marriott, with the AC Hotel, with Residence Inn, so if you haven’t already made a reservation, I would highly recommend that you look into that in the next couple of days.

Question: Did faculty and staff sign Bibles this year? If so, how did that work?

Lillian Gonzalez: Unfortunately, we did not have time before we had to move to remote distance learning. Usually we sign those Bibles later in the spring. But we will have an opportunity to do that this summer and have those available to our graduates. And I’m positive that if anyone who is not able to come to the ceremony in August reaches out that we will be glad to get you your copy of the signed Bible to you by mail.
Jo Ann Brasington: Mark Olencki is working with us to move the slides, he’s the college photographer, I know a lot of people know him. Mark, we’ve had several people ask to see the schedule slide again, so maybe while we are answering the next few questions, you could post that. We’ll see if this works, we’ve not tried this part before, so we’re going to answer some questions anyway.

David Beacham: We will surely, go ahead and shortly send that schedule out as an email to all the class. We want to make sure that the schedule is going to work and of course everything is still tentative until such time as we are ready to start the ceremony. But we are hoping that this is going to work and that the circumstances will permit that.

Jo Ann Brasington: Ok great, and you can also find a recording of this and a transcript and that information will be there, at Wofford.edu/coronavirus.

Question: Will seniors be allowed to walk through the gate as is tradition?

Lillian Gonzalez: We normally, the one time that we’ve had the ceremony in the Indoor Stadium, we did not make that walk officially as a class because it’s quite a distance from the stadium to the front gates of Old Main. However, if the seniors would like to do that, I’m sure that we can find a way to get everybody through those front gates.

Roberta Bigger: I agree, I think they should all walk or drive up there and walk through the gates.

Jo Ann Brasington: Well, we like it, Mark Olencki likes it, because we get some really good photos that way.

Roberta Bigger: It’s a very special tradition.

Lillian Gonzalez: If you want to wear sensible shoes, we will make the trek, we will go through those front gates.

Jo Ann Brasington: Ok, Class of 2020, sensible shoes, that’s the way to go!

Question: If the event is held indoors, how will Wofford work with family members and friends who are unable to walk up or down stairs to get to seats? Is there a limited number of floor-level seats for this kind of situation?

David Beacham: Let me just say that we don’t know exactly what all of the seating plan is going to be. We recognize that we will have guests who need assistance. We will have a number of people there able to offer assistance. When we have a good idea about our plan and the
number of people we might be expecting and where we might have seating for those who need extra assistance, we’ll put all of that information out and we’ll make sure everybody who’s got any authoritative role that day will know so they can be helpful to those folks.

Roberta Bigger: And Jo Ann, I would add to that, that when we have basketball games there is the elevator and there are designated areas for accessibility.

Question: Will people be required to wear masks during any of the Commencement Weekend activities or during graduation?

Mike Sosulski: So, the simple answer is, we don’t know precisely what the protocol will be for the event yet. But we do have a group on campus that is looking at both life on campus and the protocols for that during this summer as we move towards reopening and starting classes in the fall, and that’s a great question for a group like that to also consider. We will definitely have an answer on that soon.

Question: Will there be a photographer there for family members to order photos?

Jennifer Allison: We have a photographer there every year and we plan on having that same opportunity this year, just like we do, the florists, the musicians. So, from a ceremony point of view I think we’re going to try to keep it as close to what we normally do as possible, so we will definitely have a photographer there.

Question: Do students already have their caps and gowns? If not, how do they obtain them?

Jennifer Allison: Typically, they just go through the bookstore, but I will let Roberta comment because I think she does more with it with regard to the senior salute than what my office normally does.

Roberta Bigger: Yes, the bookstore mailed the caps and gowns to the seniors so if they haven’t gotten them, we can put on here Rebecca’s email address at the bookstore as a resource. But she mailed those out over a month ago.

Jo Ann Brasington: Ok, so if you didn’t get that, let us know.

Roberta Bigger: I know she’ll have extras in August that are available.

Question: Will Phi Beta Kappa awards be mailed to students along with their diplomas?

Jo Ann Brasington: I know Jennifer Allison has said that the diplomas will be mailed. Dr. Sosulski, do you know about the Phi Beta Kappa?

Mike Sosulski: That I don’t know about that actually. Jennifer, do you have any sense about that? If there is a certificate that needs to be sent, it’s possible that it could go along with the
diploma. That’s something that we could do. But if for any reason that’s an impractical thing to do and the certificate is going to be handed out the third weekend of August, then we can certainly mail that separately. We will figure that out.

Roberta Bigger: I think they were going to save the pins to give those to the students in August.

Jennifer Allison: You’re right, we haven’t really discussed anything else being included with the diploma, other than just the diploma and in part that’s just because there’s really no one else on campus at this time so I think the coordination for that just hasn’t happened right now. And I don’t know if Phi Beta Kappa was wanting to hand that out in August or what their protocol is. Obviously, if it doesn’t come with the diploma and that want to mail it, it will be mailed in the summer or handed out in August. So, if you can’t be there in August, then they can mail it to you after that point.

Lillian Gonzalez: Phillip Stone has been in touch with all of the Phi Beta Kappa inductees, he’s been in touch with them. He has ordered certificates, I don’t think they’re in yet, so I don’t think that they will be here in time anyway to mail with the diplomas. And I don’t think he’s made a decision quite yet on what to keep for August and what to go ahead and mail. But definitely if you have questions, email Dr. Phillip Stone, he’ll be able to tell you.

Jo Ann Brasington: And actually, I just got a message from Phillip and he can answer this question so I’m asking him to raise his had among the panelist and I can make him live. There he is, Phillip, you’re should be live now.

Phillip Stone: I have not ordered the keys and certificates; I am doing that this week. Our plan was to have those available to personally hand to people at the Honors Convocation, Phi Beta Kappa induction in August, and if people can’t be there, then I can certainly mail those to those immediately after that.

Jo Ann Brasington: Thank you Phillip. A parent has weighed in on the cap and gown question. She says she has contacted Jostens directly because her daughter has not received hers and Jostens says they will mail it to their home. So, thank you Mrs. Clark for that answer. Dean Bigger, we have a question about graduation announcements being available to order, do you have an answer to that?

Roberta Bigger: Again, the bookstore, they can either email Rebecca, we can put her email address up, or call her. She’s there every day in the bookstore and she’s happy to coordinate all of that.

Question: How can we be assured the diploma will be received when the cap and gown didn’t arrive?
Jo Ann Brasington: The cap and gown would come from Jostens. The diploma will arrive from Wofford College. And we’re going to make sure you are going to get your diploma, no worries.

Jennifer Allison: And, like I said, we’re planning on mailing them out the first week of June so if haven’t received your diploma by the second week of June, the beginning of the third week, then let us know and we will take care of it. Like I said, this should not be a problem. We have collected and have on file student’s addresses so I feel pretty confident that those are accurate at this point so I believe we have a better shot at getting you the diplomas than what Jostens did if they were working off an old address or something along those lines.

QUESTION: Is the Friday party just for students or also for families? Will families be able to schedule smaller outdoor parties around campus? Like outside the senior housing? Will fraternities be allowed to have parties that weekend?

Roberta Bigger: We ask that you contact, email, John Blair, he is our director of conference services, and he is in charge of scheduling any other event on campus. We know that some families have historically had picnics on campus and some of the athletic team senior parents have gotten together and done events. John Blair will help you with scheduling those. The party, just like it has always been for the weekend of commencement, for Seniors and their guests so it’s for seniors and family members. So that’s for everyone. And about the fraternities, we had this question in another town hall. Dean Hammett is working with the national offices because technically the fraternity houses wouldn’t be open in August. But it’s also about the liability of the chapters allowing an event to happen when their current officers are not present. So, it gets a little complicated but they’re looking into that.

QUESTION: Since diplomas are being sent to graduates in the mail, what will be handed out at graduation?

Jennifer Allison: Usually what we hand out at graduation is a diploma cover with the diploma. Students, for example, who attend May graduation typically but don’t finish up until summer, at the event would receive their diploma cover but without the diploma. This time around it’s probably going to be, you’ll already have your diploma, so you’ll receive your diploma cover at graduation.

Jo Ann Brasington: Amy Lancaster, thank you. Amy has just pulled up the information for the bookstore. Rebecca is the name of the bookstore manager and her number is 864-597-4060, or wofford@bkstr.com. All of this will also be in that transcript. So tomorrow at some point, check, and that will all be there as well.

QUESTION: Will graduates still be able to get their diploma covers if they are unable to attend graduation in August?
Jennifer Allison: Yes, that is what we were talking about a little bit earlier with regard to the commencement program and those items that are normally distributed as part of commencement, we would make sure that students could receive if they couldn’t be there.

Jo Ann Brasington: I have a question about marketing and they’re asking if we can send them a logo or seal to create their own announcements, and of course we can. I work in the marketing office and my email is brasingtonjm@wofford.edu. Let me send that in the chat actually. If you will email me, I will make sure that you get what you need so that you can do an invitation or announcement for family and friends.

Jo Ann Brasington: And we have another question about the pdf copy of the printed schedule. Again, that schedule, you will get it very soon along with more information about the event. We will send that schedule and other information, but you can see that at the town hall link and there will be a transcript so it will also be in writing.

Jo Ann Brasington: We’ve had another question that’s just come in about the number of people who can attend so I’m going to answer it very quickly. We don’t know that, but we are working on that so we will let you know as soon as possible.

That’s all of our live questions for this evening. Thank you for participating and to our panelists and all the people behind the scenes who have made this event possible. Remember, you can find a recording and transcript at https://www.wofford.edu/coronavirus and that schedule will be there as well, and you’re going to get an invitation with the schedule very soon as well. This concludes our virtual town hall. Stay well Terriers!