A called meeting of the Commencement Committee was convened by President Patton at 2:10 p.m. to discuss the College of Law students' concerns regarding the new diploma.

President Patton began the meeting with an introduction of the committee members and visitors (student representatives from the College of Law).

President Patton called on Evelyn Babey to present a summary of the process of choosing the new diploma.

Dr. Babey explained that about a year ago, Enrollments Services and the Graduation Office began examining the diploma and the process for ordering diplomas. They identified that a large number of diplomas that were printed were not given out to students. Diplomas had to be prepared two to three months in advance. As a result of these printing constraints, last minute changes were not possible. For example, last minute honors were placed on the diploma by a transparency rub-on process. A search began to develop a process that was more flexible and would allow the Graduation Office to make last minute changes and facilitate a production date closer to graduation. Scrip Safe was chosen, because it had developed a software that would allow the Graduation Office to print the student's name, degree, honors, date, and signatures just before graduation. Script-Safe provides the diploma paper preprinted with everything except the above-mentioned information.

A Commencement subcommittee looked at a variety of diplomas and worked for several months to design the new diploma. During the development of the new diploma, the subcommittee discovered that the seal on the old diplomas was a University system seal and not the Georgia State University seal. The subcommittee decided to use the official three-color Georgia State seal on the new diploma. Also, the subcommittee found a line referring to "rights, privileges, and honors . . ." was not on the original Georgia State diploma and decided to add the line to the new diploma. The subcommittee also looked at several kinds of paper before deciding on the 70-pound Natural Voice Text which is easier to handle and does not wrinkle as easy. It has a linen texture and works well with the printing equipment. The diploma size was decreased from 14 x 17 to 11 x 14 inches.

Presentation from Sherry Ragole, College of Law Students representative. (Ms. Ragole's notes are attached as an official part the minutes)

Sherry Ragole reported that the law students were disappointed that Georgia State decided to cast aside the "traditional diploma" which was their link to all graduates before them and the link to future Georgia State graduates. The law students felt the old diploma held an intangible value, was recognizable at a glance, and was a visible link that confers a unique identity. The law students did not believe reprinting the diplomas for some student to be justification to change the diploma and instead considered it to be an "administrative inconvenience." Ms. Ragole presented three suggestions the law students felt were reasonable for the Commencement Committee to consider:

1. Reinstate the diploma university wide, It is a valued tradition. Ordering it from an outside vendor frees the university from managing all the costs associated with its production. By continuing to order the diploma from Jostens all production costs associated with producing the diploma are represented by a single fee. The fee is a sum certain and the graduation fee can be adjusted to accommodate the expense.

2. Adopt the SGA recommendation. Those students who want the traditional diploma may have it.

3. Make an exception allowing law students to continue to receive the traditional diploma. The recognition the traditional diploma has identifying us as GSU graduates will be invaluable in our practices.

Ms. Ragole also presented to the Committee a signed petition from concerned College of Law students and undergraduate students.

It was clarified that the diploma has been changed several times over the years. Ms. Ragole believed that based on her research the same diploma has been used for at least the last 25 years. Ms. Ragole clarified that the issue with the diploma was not the size or paper, but the change of the traditional aspect of the diploma. She argued that not many students were aware of the University's plan to change the diploma.

President Patton noted that 1500 degrees on the "new diploma" were awarded Fall Semester 1998. The fact that Georgia State changed the diploma was not an issue until the Law students made it an issue this semester. Dr. Babey had met with the College of Law and the issue was not "tradition" but the size of the diploma, fonts used, shading, and the paper stock. The old diploma was printed on card stock. The new diploma is printed on a paper stock that does not
crease, is acid free and can be dry mounted.

It was noted that Georgia State has changed its look and identity and developed a new logo to update and reflect the current nature of Georgia State.

It was noted that the sizes of diplomas vary across universities. Ms. Ragole reported she found in her investigation that about 30% of law schools have different diplomas than the rest of the university. Ms. Ragole reiterated that the diploma means a lot to College of Law students and felt the decision was made without the involvement of the College of Law and without a majority of student input or knowledge.

**Discussion of a memo from Dr. James E. Scott, Vice President for Student Services.**

Dr. Scott provided a memo to the Commencement Committee regarding a meeting he had with a group of student representatives from the Georgia State College of Law who were concerned about the recent changes in the university diploma. He suggested two options for the Commencement Committee to consider.

1. Continue with the current diploma

2. Consider modifications in the current diploma design and review with the Office of the Registrar the advantages and disadvantages of using the current diploma paper stock, adjusting the spacing on the diploma to enlarge the name of the graduate, perhaps eliminating the line referring to "rights, privileges and honors . . . " and the possibility of a larger diploma.

Dr. Babey clarified that option two was a viable option.

Dr. Patton stated for the record that the College of Law had a representative on the Commencement Committee. He also stated a separate diploma for the College of Law is not a desirable option.

It was noted that the concern expressed by the law students has changed from the size and print of the new diploma to "tradition." Some undergraduates do support the law students.

Scrip Safe has indicated it can produce a larger diploma, for a small number of students. The company also indicated that to produce a larger diploma on campus would require additional costs on the campus's part. Dr. Babey will contact Scrip Safe for particulars regarding printing a larger diploma on campus.

Dr. Patton did not feel cost was a big issue. The issue was producing diplomas on time. President Patton argued that the graduation was student centered and he has defended handing out real, signed diplomas at graduation.

Dr. Babey indicated she is still searching for a heavier paper stock on which to print diplomas.

The issue of printing, the diplomas in-house being cost effective becomes moot considering the SGA no longer funding the graduation receptions. Money savings from the diploma covers the reception.

Larry Rifkind presented a motion that the Committee recommend the second option included by Jim Scott in his memorandum to the Committee dated April 1, 1999. In doing so, the current diploma design will be modified and reviewed with the Office of the Registrar, the advantages and disadvantages of using the current diploma paper stock will be considered, adjusting the spacing on the diploma to enlarge the name of the graduate will be reviewed, eliminating the line referring to "rights, privileges and honors . . . " will be considered, and the feasibility of printing a larger diploma will be reviewed. Given the printing time constraints for Spring Semester 1999 commencement, the larger diploma will be made available effective Summer Semester 1999, if approved. All other changes recommended by the Committee will be implemented for Spring Semester 1999 commencement. Students who received their degrees Fall Semester 1998 and Spring Semester 1999 will be able to request the larger diploma through the Graduation Office, if approved. No additional fee will be charged to students who choose to do so.

The motion was seconded and approved unanimously. The Office of the Registrar will provide further information regarding these matters at the scheduled April 14, 1999 (2:00 p.m.) Committee meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

Recorded by: Wanda F. Taylor

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**Notes from Sherry Ragole, College of Law Students representative**
President Patton, VP Scott, Dr. Babey, Other Committee Members, Fellow Students:

Thank you for allowing the College of Law to address the committee today. Law students are disappointed by the decision to cast aside the traditional GSU diploma. As the document awarded to graduates of an 86-year-old university, the traditional diploma is our link to all who have graduated before us and will serve to unite us with all future graduates as well. You may be wondering, why is this tradition so important to students? The tradition has an intangible value. It cannot be created by an artist with his palette, conceived in a committee room or printed on a printing press. ONLY TIME CAN MAKE A TRADITION.

Time that represents the efforts of administrators, staff, alumni and community leaders who have made personal sacrifices to build the institution we are all so proud of. Visions which have become reality. Professors nurturing students, enabling them to attain goals they never imagined possible. These factors all describe the proud tradition of GSU embodied in the traditional diploma.

GSU's traditional diploma can be recognized in but a glance by all alumni and their acquaintances. It is only natural that students and alumni want to retain this visible link which identifies them as a member of a community of alumni of this vibrant, diverse university. The diploma should remain the same not because it is superior, but because it confers a unique identity. We can conceive of no administrative inconvenience that is adequate justification for casting aside a tradition which students and alumni value so highly.

Interestingly enough, the Supreme Court has considered constitutional cases dealing with similar circumstances. In those cases, regulations were enacted which affected the majority of the population in order to deal with behavior of a minority. This is similar to changing the GSU degree because the justification offered is that some students fail to graduate, or need last minute adjustments on their degrees. In such a case the Supreme Court has found that the administrative policies should affect only the individuals which make a special policy necessary. Administrative convenience has been held to be an inadequate justification on which to enact a policy that affects the population in general in order to deal with inconveniences caused by a minority.

I am not here to suggest how the administration could deal with the fact that degrees of a minority of students must be reprinted. I feel confident the administration is talented enough to develop a variety of alternatives. For instance, many institutions elect to use embossed gold medallions that can be placed on the diploma to designate honors. These are attractive and stand out as a distinctive honor.

Suggestions to change the paper or refine the font used to print the new diploma only modify the document that replaces our tradition. This does not address our concern. Please consider the reasonable alternatives available to salvage the traditional diploma, which can and should be preserved for all students.

1. Reinstate the diploma university wide. It is a valued tradition. Ordering it from an outside vendor frees the university from managing all the costs associated with its production. By continuing to order the diploma from Jostens all production costs associated with producing the diploma are represented by a single fee. The fee is a sum certain and the graduation fee can be adjusted to accommodate the expense.

2. Adopt the SGA recommendation. Those students who want the traditional diploma may have it.

3. Make an exception allowing law students to continue to receive the traditional diploma. The recognition the traditional diploma has identifying us as GSU graduates will be invaluable in our practices.

Throughout this controversy we have heard administrators say "this just isn't that important." This is very important to us. Many students express such a strong affection for the traditional diploma that they are vowing not to even consider supporting the university as alumni unless it is restored. Put another way, the number of GSU College of Law graduates in Georgia is now reaching a level where it constitutes a community of graduates. The current students are very conscious about their duty to give back to institutions and the community at large. The current Law Week activities which center on a vast array of social service prerogatives are evidence of this. We like to give. Heeding our concerns and reinstating the traditional diploma will show us the university is responsive and respects our sentiments and values.

In closing I would like to state if this is not that important, then do not cast aside a diploma which is so precious to so many because it has become inconvenient. Reconsider the injustice and emotional pain this inflicts on those of us who hold this diploma, as a tradition linking Georgia State's proud past with its promising future, in high esteem. Reinstate the traditional diploma in order to preserve a valued university symbol and the future of alumni funding.