The meeting of the Commencement Committee was held on Wednesday, March 14 at 9:00 a.m. Members present were: President Patton, Charles Gilbreath, Ralph LaRossa, Catherine McGovern, Larry Rifkind, Sue Seago, and Leslie Williams (for Kurt Keppler).

The minutes of the previous meeting, September 21, 2000, were approved. Dr. Patton began with discussion of the ceremony. All agreed that the problem of too few volunteers helping with the ceremony has escalated and must be addressed. It was reported that in December there were two from the SGA for the first ceremony and three staff volunteers for the second. One possibility would be to have each of the colleges provide a certain number of staff for the ceremonies, with comp time provided for those helping. Dr. Patton will discuss this with the Provost. Dr. Rifkind mentioned the offices of Academic Assistance as one possible source of help. Another possibility would be some student assistants who could be paid for the hours they worked at commencement. It was pointed out that the workers need to be trained to be prepared for what is needed at the ceremonies. Charles Gillbreath and Catherine McGovern will put together necessary information for the helpers. They will also determine the number of workers needed and where they need to be positioned, and will provide Dr. Patton with that information. There should be no fewer than 12 workers, and the ideal number, including ushers, is much higher. Also, that should be a police officer on each floor stationed at the elevator.

The problem that occurred at the last ceremony with the professional photography group will be discussed with V.P. Johnston to assure that this will go smoothly in the future. Additional difficulties in December were the result of icy weather since salt had to be put down on the walks and bridges, then salt tracked into the Arena had to be swept up immediately and a few people slipped and fell (on the salt in the building). Dr. Patton commented that, despite problems that arise, we do a very good job with the ceremony.

Charles Gilbreath reported that the May commencement currently looks like it will be very full. There are 825 seats for graduates on the floor, with 892 now planning to walk. The tickets will contain the following message: "Required for admission but this does not guarantee a seat."

Dr. Rifkind suggested reviewing the fall commencement change related to students being able to walk without grades being finalized. He commented that the situation was different for some since there was not the usual definitive closure by graduation time. Before the change due to the move to semesters, students did have closure. Now the final grade file cannot be run until after the ceremony. Following that, the diplomas are produced and mailed, with the process taking about six weeks. During this time, however, work is also beginning on the next semester's graduation. Those who did walk but did not qualify were very distressed and vocal. Students did not know if they actually graduated or not, so they made many calls to the Graduation Office and those of Academic Assistance.

Dr. Patton stated that currently there are no nominations for an honorary degree and he does not have a backlog of suggestions. The committee was encouraged to deep this in mind and send any suggestion to him. The speaker for May commencement has not been finalized yet. He is hoping to have someone with a science connection for that ceremony. He would like to have a list of back-up speaker from the colleges and also would appreciate having suggestions from the committee e-mailed to him. Two possible political speakers mentioned were Lt. Governor Mark Taylor and Rebecca Paul, head of the Georgia Lottery which funds HOPE. The committee discussed the request that the major be listed on the diploma as well on the degree.
Leslie Williams told the committee of two student deaths this semester. Both students were in good standing and in their last semester before graduating. Their families will be contacted concerning the degrees being presented posthumously.

Submitted by,

Frances B. Stone