The spring semester meeting of the Commencement Committee was held on Monday, February 23rd at 3:00 p.m. Those attending were: President Patton, Erin Erskine, San Miller, Marcia Pearl, Cherise Peters, John Rieken, Christopher Robertson, Mary Shoffner, and Rebecca Stout. The minutes of the meeting of August 27, 2003, were approved.

The first item of business was discussion of the ceremony. In the future there will be different people reading the graduates names. Charlene Holmes was able to step in with two days notice to read the names in December, and Dr. Patton was very grateful for her willingness to help. The new sound system will be installed by April. The volunteers worked out well, doing an especially good job at the 5:00 p.m. ceremony. One hopeful change was having Rebecca Stout enter first and announce to the audience what to do and what to expect. It made a difference, with the audience seeming more respectful. Preparing for the future, Dr. Winkler identified four from Communications who would be able to read the names, along with others. Bill Fritz will train these readers. Erin Erskin will talk to Dr. Henry about having representatives from schools other than Arts and Sciences. Showing them a video of past commencements with Larry Rifkind reading the names should help emphasize the importance of keeping the flow going. This also helps minimize noise. One time the chiller went down and the space became too warm.

The proposed schedule change for spring involves rotating the schools so that different years they have their ceremonies at different times. The committee approved this, and the information will be sent out. Currently, the numbers expected to graduate in the spring semester are: 985 in Arts and Sciences, 744 in RCB, and 832 in the other colleges. In the past there have been approximately 25% “no shows.” The Registrar’s Office is trying to communicate more with graduates to improve on this. The tickets will have the foil printing so they cannot be copied. There will again be four tickets per person. The overflow site is in the Speakers Auditorium.

Each year Georgia State can award one or two honorary degrees. Criteria considered when making nominations should include affiliation with Georgia State University, being a role model, community and university support. The process begins with President’s letter calling for nominations. The Committee then makes a recommendation to Dr. Patton, who contacts the Board of Regents for approval. There must also be a check to be sure that no other honorary degree has been awarded within the University System to the person nominated. Rhodes Haverty and Truett Cathy have been nominated, and the Committee approved recommending both for honorary degrees. The speakers will be Mike Easterly at the first ceremony, Dean Sidney Harris for the RCB, and Dr. Patton will ask Rhodes Haverty for the third ceremony (if approved by the Regents). Commencement is an important part of the university’s work here, including having the students leave feeling good about Georgia State.

Submitted by,
Frances B. Stone