Commencement Committee Minutes
May 3, 2005

The organizational meeting of the Commencement Committee was held on May 3, 2005. Those attending were: President Patton, Pedro Carrillo, Erin Erskine, Kwame Lawson, Carrie Manning, San Miller, Cherise Peters, Alan Raines, John Reiken, Christopher Robertson, and Rebecca Stout.

Dr. Patton welcomed the new members of the committee, and commented that the job of this group is to assure that we have a nice commencement, to recommend names of potential speakers, and to consider nominations for honorary degrees. The minutes of the meeting of September 2, 2004 were approved.

Discussion centered on the ceremony. The number of graduates is quite large, which is why we now have a total of seven separate ceremonies – three in May, two in August and two in December. We have reached our space limit in the Athletic Arena, and are able to provide only four tickets per graduating student. In the future we are planning to change to one large ceremony off campus, at either the Dome or Phillips Arena. This event will be held on a Friday evening, and with an internationally known speaker. The next day there will be individual ceremonies on campus for each of the colleges. At this time, graduates names will be called. Surveys of students are being conducted to determine their perceptions of these proposed changes. The many details involved in such changes are also being studied.

The commencement ceremony begins with a "Reflection" which Provost Henry has been giving. Instead, for the August ceremony, David Bottoms – Poet Laureate for the State of Georgia, and Professor of English – will read a poem. The Registrar's Office may outsource diploma printing so these could be ready much earlier than they are currently. This would be at no additional expense. For the December commencement there were enough volunteers. There is a new audio system, so previous problems should now be solved. Facilities is working to solve the problems with the gym seats and all will be carefully tested prior to the May ceremonies. The tickets for May will include some gold foil in order to make copying difficult. It is necessary to use tickets so that all graduates can have at least a few guests attend. The marshals should check to be sure that all graduates do have the card with their name for the reader to use. Some of the students forget, and this causes difficulties. A group of nomenclators is being developed so that none will need to serve for more than one or two ceremonies each year.

Dr. Patton commented that speakers should have a connection to Georgia State. It is helpful if someone has heard the person proposed speak before. Committee members should send their suggestions for speakers to President Patton. Julie Gerberding, head of CDC, was suggested, but she is very hard to schedule, and especially if a crisis develops. Politicians can be considered, but not if they are running for office.