

February 23, 2007

The following is a report from the Student Affairs Committee (SAC) of the University Senate regarding the GCSU Commencement speaker.

The Student Affairs Committee of the 2006-2007 University Senate was charged by President Leland with the responsibility of collecting information on the approach different colleges and universities use to select their commencement speaker for the graduation ceremony as well as to assess the opinions of the campus community on the process and desires in the role of commencement speaker.

The committee set out to understand the history of the current selection process as well as past selection processes to better understand the current climate. Our processes included research, guest presenters and extensive dialogue. The Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC) and peer University System of Georgia (USG) schools were surveyed and it was found that the commencement speakers were selected by a range of varied methods. The COPLAC and USG research can be found in the addendum section of this document.

The information gathering process led the committee to our next step which was to assess the GCSU community for their opinions regarding the speaker and their current satisfaction. The process for assessing the community was decided to be an anonymous, online survey that took into account the demographics of students, staff, faculty and alumni. A total of 289 responses were made on the survey which was available online on the MyCats pages from mid-December 2006 until Jan 26, 2007. The results of the survey and a copy of the survey can be found in the addendum section of this document.

The committee has reviewed the documents generated by the survey and we would like to share a few observations on the process. Barbara Monnett aided our Information Gathering Group (IGG) in getting the document on line and in retrieving the information. Barbara has said that the numbers that we generated are better than she has seen before for an on line MyCats instrument. However, 289 responses are not good numbers for statistically sound information. The committee could resubmit the survey perhaps in other forums if Dr. Leland or the University Senate felt that was a proper course. Some ideas that we have generated are perhaps to bring it up on line again, attach the written survey to pay stubs for all employees, attach to class surveys for instructors, or have seniors complete it during their Senior Exit Exams. The SAC will welcome input from Dr. Leland or the Senate.

There was also some question on the preference numbering system. Some of the committee has received feedback concerning the 1-5 preference system with 1 being the top and 5 being the lowest. Apparently this caused confusing. In reviewing the document responses versus the numbers perhaps it did or perhaps only the more “vocal” respondents made comments. The committee feels that the numbering system was clearly stated in the survey.

Finally, the committee has noted that the result of the survey appears to reflect a campus climate that has opposing viewpoints. While not surprising for some committee members others were surprised. We submit the attached final report to Dr. Leland and the University Senate as an information item. The SAC hopes that the information gathered will be useful to Dr. Leland and the Commencement Committee as they plan future Commencement Ceremonies.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen M. McGeever, Chair
Student Affairs Committee

GCSU Commencement Speaker Survey

The Student Affairs Committee of the 2006-2007 University Senate was charged by President Leland with the responsibility of collecting information on the approach different colleges and universities use to select their commencement speaker for the graduation ceremony. When the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC) and peer University System of Georgia (USG) schools were surveyed, it was found that the commencement speakers were selected by a range of varied methods.

The purpose of this survey is to assess the opinion of the campus community about the process by which the GCSU commencement speaker is chosen.

1. Please indicate the number of GCSU graduations you have attended.

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1-3
- ☐ 4-6
- ☐ 6-10
- ☐ 10+

2. Georgia College & State University's commencement speaker has previously been the recipient of the Distinguished Service Award, which is given to a person who has provided significant service to Georgia. This recipient has been nominated and selected by GCSU faculty.

How satisfied are you with this selection criteria?

- ☐ Satisfied ☐ Somewhat Satisfied ☐ Don't know/ No opinion
☐ Somewhat Unsatisfied ☐ Unsatisfied

3. Please **rank** the following characteristics of a potential commencement speaker from 1 to 5 (with 1 being the most important characteristic and 5 being the least important characteristic).

- ☐ A publicly recognizable name
- ☐ An inspirational speaker
- ☐ An entertaining speaker
- ☐ A humanitarian role model
- ☐ A person of impressive personal accomplishments
- Other: _____

4. Please **rank** the following purposes of the commencement speech from 1 to 6 (with 1 being the most important purpose and 6 being the least important purpose).

- ___ To offer challenging viewpoints and opinions
- ___ To celebrate the success of graduates
- ___ To honor parents and families
- ___ To maintain tradition
- ___ To bring positive attention to the university
- ___ To be brief

Other: _____

5. When COPLAC and peer USG schools were surveyed, we found that most chose their commencement speakers by using the following methods. Please indicate any commencement speaker selection methods that you would like to see GCSU implement. (check all that apply)

- ___ Continue what we are doing now
- ___ Nominations made by President's Cabinet; President approves
- ___ Distinguished alumni chosen by the Alumni Association
- ___ Commencement Committee proposes speaker; President approves
- ___ President chooses with no input
- ___ Faculty, staff, and students make recommendations; President chooses speaker
- ___ Commencement speaker is a student recipient of honorary award
- ___ Campus community nominates and votes on a website; graduate students and seniors make final decision
- ___ Speaker is always the SGA President
- ___ Speaker is always a dignitary/elected official
- ___ Speaker is a recipient of distinguished faculty/teaching award
- ___ Other Suggestions-

Optional Demographic Information:

6. I am a (*choose one*):

- ___ Faculty member
- ___ Student
- ___ Staff member
- ___ Administrator
- ___ Alumnus/Alumnae
- ___ Parent
- ___ Community member

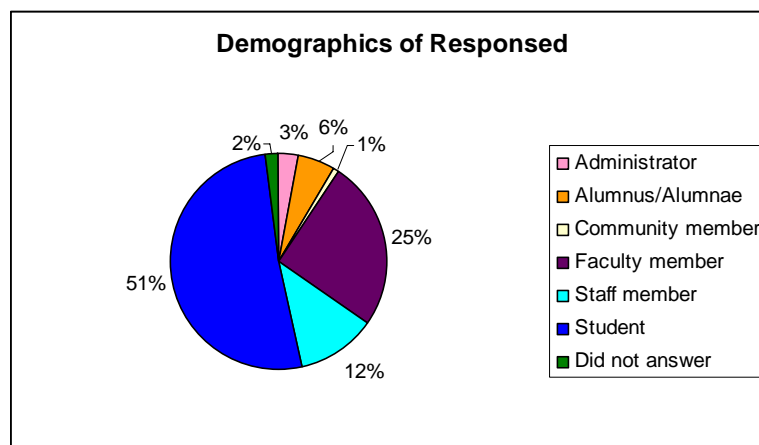
We appreciate any additional comments you would like to make:

Commencement Survey

A total of 289 responses were made on the survey. The survey was available online on the MyCats pages from up from mid-December until Jan 26.

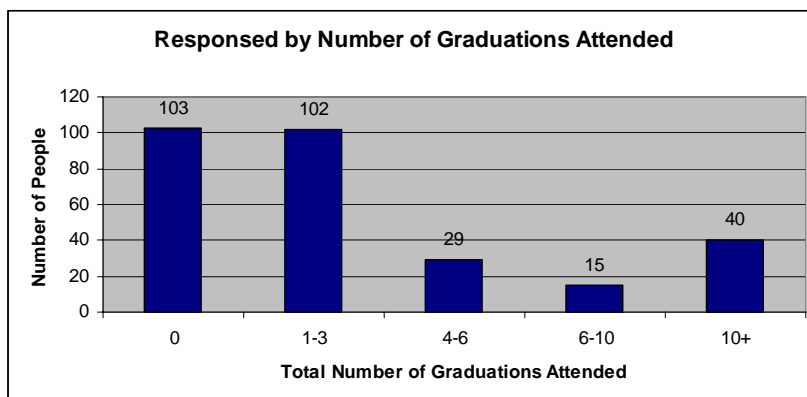
The demographic breakdown of the responses:

Administrator	Alumnus/Alumnae	Community member	Faculty member	Staff member	Student	Did not answer
9	16	2	73	34	149	6



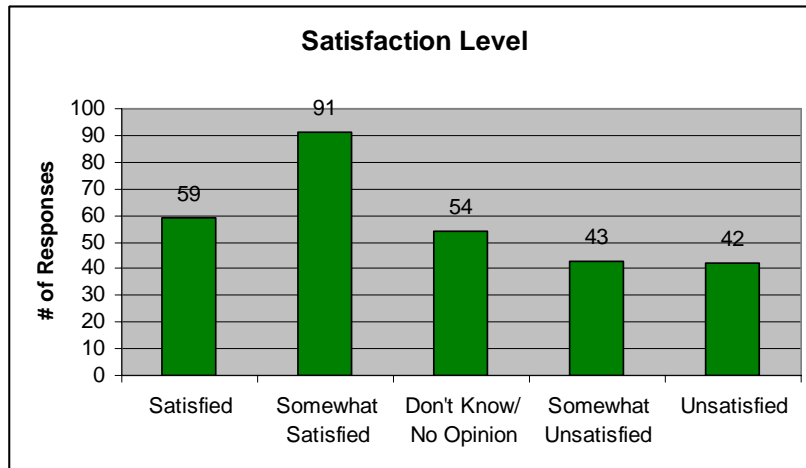
Number of Graduations Attended:

Number of Graduations Attended	0	1-3	4-6	6-10	10+
Responses	103	102	29	15	40



Satisfaction Level:

Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Don't Know/ No Opinion	Somewhat Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied
59	91	54	43	42



Question 3: Please **rank** the following characteristics of a potential commencement speaker from 1 to 5 (with 1 being the most important characteristic and 5 being the least important characteristic).

- ___ A publicly recognizable name
- ___ An inspirational speaker
- ___ An entertaining speaker
- ___ A humanitarian role model
- ___ A person of impressive personal accomplishments
- Other: _____

Ranked each category as 1—Most Important

Publicly Recognizable Name	An Inspirational Speaker	An Entertaining Speaker	A Humanitarian Role Model	A Person of Impressive Personal Accomplishments
101	19	39	68	62

Ranked each category as 5—Least Important

Publicly Recognizable Name	An Inspirational Speaker	An Entertaining Speaker	A Humanitarian Role Model	A Person of Impressive Personal Accomplishments
34	98	74	40	43

Question 4: Please **rank** the following purposes of the commencement speech from 1 to 6 (with 1 being the most important purpose and 6 being the least important purpose).

- ___ To offer challenging viewpoints and opinions
- ___ To celebrate the success of graduates
- ___ To honor parents and families
- ___ To maintain tradition
- ___ To bring positive attention to the university
- ___ To be brief

Other: _____

Ranked each category as 1—Most Important

To offer challenging viewpoints and opinions	To celebrate the success of graduates	To honor parents and families	To maintain tradition	To bring positive attention to the university	To be brief
88	9	30	74	32	56

Ranked each category as 6—Least Important

To offer challenging viewpoints and opinions	To celebrate the success of graduates	To honor parents and families	To maintain tradition	To bring positive attention to the university	To be brief
61	171	9	6	17	25

Additional Comments:

- I was very proud to be a graduate in May 2006 and enjoyed the Commencement speaker. He spoke of a very important message, and I was greatly embarrassed as the crowd started booing him, without even listening to the message he was trying to put forth.
- I was very unhappy with the politicizing of the 2006 Spring ceremonies (my undergraduate degree). That is not the time or the place to discuss those things- the whole point of being there is the graduating class, and to commend us on our accomplishments and

encourage us to go out into the world and be successful. I hope that the 2007 Spring ceremonies (my graduate degree) will be more appropriate.

- An Alum that has excelled in success, achievement or humanitarianism.
- It is always nice when a commencement speaker does not come across as someone who is "on tour"; giving commencement speeches every weekend with the same clichés and platitudes that are so shallow. A commencement speaker should be a person who "walks the talk," has something of value to say, and doesn't grandstand. Too many commencement speakers are out to promote themselves and have very little of worth to say - particularly politicians. So many of GCSU's students have such admirable goals for their lives: some wish to enter the Peace Corps, others have different, but worthy, aspirations and deserve a commencement speaker who represents hope and challenges the students to do their very best in life.
- Last year's spring speaker brought up issues that were not appropriate for the ceremony and caused quite an uproar
- Commencement ceremonies last so long anyway with all the graduates that the ceremony does not need any extra length added to it by lengthy speakers.
- Faculty members have traditionally done a really good job.
- the exact opposite as the speaker for the graduation of 06
- I think the graduating student body should have an input on the speaker. After all, it is their graduation and they along with their relatives and friends that are the main audience.
- The primary focus should be to celebrate the graduates and be brief.
- The speech should not be a time for the speaker to voice their opinions on matters. The speech should be uplifting and inspirational. This is a celebration, not a stage to discuss controversial topics.
- Commencement speakers should in no way talk about their personal political beliefs that are controversial and could ruin this wonderful day for many graduates and families.
- I think it's important to be careful when honoring parents and families. Although some families are actively involved in their student's time in college, other students push through college on their own. For this reason, I think families should be recognized without extra emphasis.
- Students and parents do not need a pat on the head nor to be told how wonderful they are. Acknowledgement of their success is fine, but not an entire speech - how ridiculous.<CR>If this university is truly a liberal arts institution, then we should have taught our students to expect a challenge.
- A person of significance in the State of Georgia is great.
Someone of "national" prominence would be even better.
- Commencement speakers should not make any political statements in their speeches. Commencement should be about the graduating students, not the speaker's personal opinion about the war or any other policy issues.

- I think the commencement speech should be primarily celebratory AND challenging (inspiring might be a better word). Anti-american propaganda is neither. Challenging is one thing; offensive is something else. Understanding this distinction should be a prime requisite of the committee members who select the speaker.
- Bring someone that is slightly intelligent and doesn't deal the same pompous bureaucratic nonsense about politics and such and how I will make the world better..blah blah blah..
- To give inspiration to the graduates in their future endeavors.
- Nothing politically controversial like last year. A graduation ceremony is not a platform for politics, it is a celebration of education, academic accomplishment, and future potential.
- Not the guy from last year. Who wants a president and military basher!?
- DSA recipient is a fine challenging person to challenge and emulate
- We do NOT need any more speakers who slam our government or our military!!!!!!!!!!!!!! We may not like our current government or any other government. We may not agree with the war. But the men and women fighting for our country need our support and not another welcome home Vietnam situation!!!!!!
- To give inspiration to the graduates in their future endeavors.
- Speaker should celebrate the success of those graduating, be inspirational and entertaining, not too long winded, and most importantly speak on terms that will not agitate the audience or graduates, as some speakers have done in the past.
- The actual speech is more important than the speaker or their accomplishments. It should be entertaining at first, then inspirational, with climax consisting of the motivational belief or creed that will inspire the students and make them understand the importance of their accomplishments and where they are in the world. But it is very important to be brief because long speeches lose attention.
- why can't i use the same answers to all questions
- To offer advice to graduates
- NOT embarrass any constituency on campus.
- I have yet (in the nearly 2 dozen commencements I've attended) to hear more than a couple of speakers worth the time to sit and listen to them. The purpose of the event is to recognize the graduating students, not listen to a speaker!
- To challenge the graduates to participate in making positive contributions to their city, state and country - BUT should not use the speech as a political forum.
- I greatly applaud last year's main speaker. He brought the right combination of commitment to Georgia, a lifetime of accomplishments, and a willingness to dignify the intellectual work of the university by asking us to think, rather than offering us some trite discussion of platitudes. The Friday night speaker (for SOLAS in the fieldhouse--the lawyer affiliated with the alumni association), on the other hand, had the intellectual stimulation of a Paris Hilton interview. Please do not reduce the intellectual life of the university--our real work--to the level of a football team awards banquet. We are not gathered at this university for mere social interaction, despite the trend of hiring large

numbers of overpaid vice presidents instead of hiring committed faculty members. This community should be based in learning, in dialogue about difficult topics, and about exposure to ideas. Nor should this commencement be turned into a fundraising venture where we merely allow some rich person to talk so that the University might collect a big check in gratitude. That's just a kind of prostitution. The Albany minister last year exemplified the kind of intellectual stimulation that we need more of, not less.

5. When COPLAC and peer USG schools were surveyed, we found that most chose their commencement speakers by using the following methods. Please indicate any commencement speaker selection methods that you would like to see GCSU implement. (check all that apply)

- ☐ Continue what we are doing now
- ☐ Nominations made by President's Cabinet; President approves
- ☐ Distinguished alumni chosen by the Alumni Association
- ☐ Commencement Committee proposes speaker; President approves
- ☐ President chooses with no input
- ☐ Faculty, staff, and students make recommendations; President chooses speaker
- ☐ Commencement speaker is a student recipient of honorary award
- ☐ Campus community nominates and votes on a website; graduate students and seniors make final decision
- ☐ Speaker is always the SGA President
- ☐ Speaker is always a dignitary/elected official
- ☐ Speaker is a recipient of distinguished faculty/teaching award
- ☐ Other Suggestions-

Continue what we are doing now	33	Commencement speaker is a student recipient of honorary award	146
Nominations made by President's Cabinet; President approves	34	Campus community nominates and votes on a website; graduate students and seniors make final decision	3
Distinguished alumni chosen by the Alumni Association	84	Speaker is always the SGA President	18
Commencement Committee proposes speaker; President approves	4	Speaker is always a dignitary/elected official	49

President chooses with no input	152	Speaker is a recipient of distinguished faculty/ teaching award	63
Faculty, staff, and students make recommendations; President chooses speaker	47		

Other Suggestions:

- I believe that someone with a personal connection with the university, such as alumni, a student, or faculty member of the GCSU community is the best speaker. It gives the ceremony a personal touch when alumni can share their own GCSU experiences and how they have gone on to achieve success; or a student who one shared a class with is relating their experiences that those graduating can identify with; or a faculty member that the graduates had as a teacher. All of which adds a more personal touch because the student who is graduating either knows the individual or can relate.
- I hope my comments above (#4 other) will appear in its entirety. Although I was allowed to continue typing, the final product doesn't appear in full.
- I really like the idea of nominations with grads making the final decision.
- Students should have the strongest say.
- The graduating students should have the most input (more than president)
- We need a football team.
- I think that is very important that the graduates have a say in the speaker selection process. At my previous university, all graduates are allowed to make recommendations and SGA decides among these selections, pending the approval of the president. Other than the approval, the selection was entirely student oriented.
- Speaker should be inspirational and not long-winded. Recommendations should go to the Commencement Committee, who would narrow the list to 2-3 then the Presidents chooses from there.
- I believe that, because GCSU is a liberal arts university, we should be able to have a variety of speakers. Our university should appeal to many varieties of people and we should exercise our ability to have "different" speakers.
- A commencement speaker selection committee (CSSC) is formed comprised of relevant stakeholders (graduating students, and members (faculty, staff, administrators) of the university community). The process by which this committee is formed would be proposed by the 2006-2007 Student Affairs Committee.<P>1. The CSSC invites open nominations for a commencement speaker from the Alumni Association (distinguished alumni) as well as all members of the University Community (faculty, staff, students (particularly those eligible to partipate in the commencement exercises), administrators).<P>2. The CSSC reviews the pool of nominees and narrows the pool as necessary to a

"short list" (at most five nominees) using the criteria emerging from the analysis of the results of this fantastic survey. This committee may choose to consult with appropriate individuals such as the University President, or others it deems to offer it some expertise. Ideally those likely to provide such expertise to this committee should be members of it.

3.A. Those graduates who would be eligible to attend the commencement ceremony are invited to rank the nominees to express their preferences. (This might be done as they order their cap and gown and complete their exit survey. Brief descriptions of the nominees are provided for context.)

3.B. The University Faculty are also invited to rank the nominees to express their preferences. (Brief descriptions of the nominees are provided for context.)

4. The CSSC summarizes the information collected and offers its own recommendations (as it deems appropriate) to the University President.

5. The University President makes the final selection using the information collected by the CSSC.

- Campus community nominates and votes on a website; and president makes the final decision.
- I believe that the institution (students, faculty, and staff) should have in put on the speaker. However the ultimate decision should be left to the senior class and the president. I believe that GCSU should also highlight a student speaker allowing them 5-15 minutes and then have a well known speaker (elected official not required but publically recognized)
- Commencement speaker is president of the college.
- Have Commencement Committee propose a short list of three possible speakers, from which the President makes a selection. I also think that the Committee needs to research potential speakers carefully.
- Faculty, staff, and students make recommendations; Commencement Committee chooses the speaker
- Choices should be nominated by students and voted upon by students. There is no real legitimate reason for faculty or administrative involvement.
- Fire Leland..theres a good suggestion..
- Faculty, staff, and students make recommendations; faculty, staff, and students choose speaker.
- no military personnelno clergy
- Nomination by University Senate; President approves
- Speaker should be "auditioned" by a senior GCSU executive who has heard this individual on a previous occasion or through videotape. Faculty should have an input since they are the ones who forged the education being celebrated.
- This campus is not so much a "liberal arts" campus with such views. A majority of this campus has very conservative views. Don't forget, we are your future alumnae and financial contributors.

- Faculty, staff and students make recommendations and all parties vote for speaker
- How about letting the graduating seniors nominate and choose? It's supposed to be about them, isn't it? Nobody comes to the event to hear the speaker. They come to see the graduates. There is no need for a long, boring (or even entertaining) speaker, particularly because they'd don't relate to the students and often don't relate to the university. We certainly don't need to spend any money on bringing in a big-name speaker. Nobody cares. And if we have access to that kind of money, we should be spending it on more important things.
- I would actually like to see a committee of faculty and students that works from agreed-upon guidelines and then solicits input from the community for candidates that meet those guidelines. You could have have the community vote from a roster, just like our presidential primaries. I think the final decision should be joint committee with Presidential veto (just like Congress and the President).<CR><CR>I realize this is imperfect, like every other system, but it does have a way of getting maximum input, which tends to make people care more!
- Choose individuals of intellectual distinction, not politicians
- I think a lot of my answer would depend on the amount of budget allocated to the ceremony.

Additional Comments:

- You should bring back fall commencement. It is unfair to make those of us who have worked to graduate early wait until spring, when some of us will be well into graduate degrees by then.
- I believe that commencement is a time to celebrate all of the students' hard work and effort that went into completing their academic degree. It is a time to celebrate. Even though I respect a person's first amendment rights, the speaker's platform is not an opportunity for an individual to air out personal, political, and/or religious agendas. If an individual does so, I believe that it takes the reason for the occasion out of focus and instead places a hot topic in the spotlight.
- BRING BACK THE DECEMBER COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY, ITS NOT FAIR FOR THE GRADS THAT LEAVE AT THE END OF THE FALL SEMESTER DO NOT GET TO HAVE A CEREMONY FOR THEIR GRADUATION AND MUST WAIT UNTIL MAY, AND MORE THAN LIKELY WILL NOT COME BACK TO WALK! THATS THE IMPORTANT PART ABOUT GRADUATING, FOR THEM AND FOR THEIR FAMILIES!!!!
- The person making the speech needs to be memorable by the parents and students specifically.
- Every other decision on campus is made by a group including all aspects of the campus community (student, staff, faculty, and administration). This choice or decision should be no different. The President may have the final choice, but recommendations/nominations should be made from the "grass roots" level up as this decision will reflect on everyone and bring notice (good or bad) to our entire campus community.

- Nothing is worse for a graduation than a long, boring commencement speaker who drones on about their own agenda, with no relevance to the institution or the graduates.
- I hope GCSU will not "cave in" to any pressure to select a typical commencement speaker who is "on tour" (as I mentioned above) and who is "politically correct." Academic freedom and inquiry should apply to commencement speakers as it should to students and faculty.
- Thank you for asking our opinions! After all, it is our graduation ceremony and it is to honor those who have made it to this day.
- Thank you for trying to make each commencement ceremony better than the last.
- I think it is very important that the speaker does not speak about his personal feelings about certain issues. I graduated in May of 2006. Our speaker was very good up until the point where he started talking about his feelings on the war in Iraq and President Bush. In a conservative community like this, you have very conservative parents who attended our graduation. They started booing the speaker and a big uproar was caused. So, needless to say that at my graduation for the most part I don't remember being excited about graduating but about how ridiculous it was for parents to be acting like they did at their child's graduation. It was just not a good experience. We needed a speaker who was going to inspire us to go out in the world and do great things, not a speaker who was going to talk about his personal feelings on very controversial issues.
- The graduating students should have the most input (more than president)
- post results in school paper and on school web site
- Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into your committee deliberation. The Student Affairs Committee of the University Senate rocks!
- I am also an alum of the school and have been very dissatisfied with the commencement speakers. A school of our caliber should be attracting better speakers from around the country - not just the state. It is time to challenge the campus community to accept speakers who may not be as "traditional" as we're used to.
- I believe that the graduating class should be able to participate in the process a lot more. Our opinion matters, especially since we are the ones who have worked so hard to get ourselves to this milestone. We are also the ones who have paid for this journey, so why are we limited to the guests that we can bring. I hate that I have worked so hard for this honor and hardly anyone who has supported me will be able to see me graduate. I could care less if we have it in the gym...at least those close and important to me would be able to see my accomplishment.
- The best speakers are motivational, uplifting, optimistic about the future of our students/world, willing to make a difference, and, if possible--entertaining/humorous/brief. The focus of the day is on our students and their accomplishments/family.
- I think it would be great if we got a well known person to speak. It would bring a lot of attention to the university and would be exiting for the graduates and their families.

- As a recent graduate, following the 2006 Spring Commencement Ceremony, I think there should be something submitted by the speaker to give a brief account of the topics they will cover. The speaker from May 2006 should not have been allowed to say the things he did and I was embarrassed to have him as a speaker, as well as embarrassed by the audience for their comments. It was the graduates day and was completely ruined.
- Your 1-6 is backwards compared to alot of surveys & I bet many submitted will be opposite what they really meant. (I didn't catch mine until I went back through the survey).<CR><CR>Graduation is a day for graduates. The speaker should not be controversial. Speakers should be told this & of they do not agree - change speakers! There are many other opportunities to bring controversial speakers to campus.
- Fire Leland..<P>she thinks the papparazi is after her all the time.
- Thanks for asking our opinions and showing that you value your student and faculty body.
- I'd really like to see more women and minority speakers!!! I'm quite tired of the uvuncular white male stereotype.
- i graduated last year from GCSU and am graduating this year with my masters. I was highly disappointed in the speaker who was chosen last year for the undergraduates. Please choose a less controversial more neutral speaker. The day was supposed to be about the graduates, but instead, it was about the controversial speaker.
- Please, let's have no more disasters like last year! Please consider the politics of our students and their parents when making decisions on speakers. Graduation is not the time to make one more attempt to force a particular political ideology on our graduates. It is a time to celebrate their success, encourage continued interaction and support of the university, and send them off with a good feeling about their years at GCSU.
- I have not been to a GCSU commencement but have been to no less than 6 college commencements around the country and all the good speakers were inspirational, positive, and if not humorous, light-hearted. This is not the time for a speaker to have an agenda of their own. The agenda is already the students' success on reaching this major milestone. All speakers considered need to be vetted by a senior GCSU executive and must be 'auditioned' by having been heard by this executive at another speech, either in person or on video. This should not be a surprise speech, and the speaker should not have any qualms about forwarding a copy of their notes or written speech prior to the engagement. This is not for editing purposes but to ensure the right tone is set.
- The speech should *not* be one that is pitched to the lowest common denominator, simply to validate students' and their parents' (uninformed) opinions and bigotry.
- I believe that the graduating students should have a say in who the speaker is.
- The speaker last year at the May 2006 undergraduate ceremony was TERRIBLE and I hope that you can make a much better decision this year based on the student population not the liberal ideas of the professors. I thought it was terrible of the speaker to speak out against the war whn so many family memberes of the graduating class are veterans or have other children fighting over seas. I didn't care about his accomplishments I think he should have encouraged the graduates ond commended them on their success rather

than using the graduation for a public platform. I hope you find someone who won't be booed off the stage this year.

- Last year's speaker was fantastic and challenging. He walked the walk about which he was speaking. He was the best in my 50+ graduations here.
- The spotlight of graduation is the students. Since the ceremonies are now held outside (which I hate due to unknown weather and temperatures and may be the deciding factor determining if my family or I will participate), the speakers need to be brief and straight to the point with their messages.
- I have been disappointed with speakers who drew so much attention away from the event itself that the graduates were no longer the focus of the. Regardless of the speaker, after I graduate I want friends and family to ask me about my plans or offer congratulations, not ask me questions related to the speaker.
- so i can not say the same answers for all questions? why?
- Try to get selected speaker to understand, commencement is NOT a time to push their own personal, political, or religious agenda. It is a time of celebration for students and their families. Positive, encouraging message is the order of the day.
- I am a current staff member and GCSU alumnus.
- Thank you for this work.
- good survey
- i think we shouldn't have to rank 1-5, but be able to rank more than one reason with the same numbers. For example: To maintain tradition and to be brief i should be able to rank them both lets say 3. i feel limited.
- Currently, I am both a staff member as well as a recent alumni. I strongly believe that the role of a commencement speaker should be to maintain the tradition of the university, while highlighting the achievements of the graduating class. Last year's commencement speaker, while being very articulate and thoughtful, also approached the boundaries of offensive by espousing his views on controversial world issues. While he has a right to his opinion, his speech and resulting crowd reactions took the focus away from the students being honored; and it is the achievements of those students which will bring prestige to the university long after any speaker has come and gone.
- I think that commencement should be about the students. They have worked hard to get where they are and they shouldn't be hurried on and off the stage, just so someone can get out of the heat(when held outside). and try being practical. As nice as it is, when it's outside, have it inside, at Centennial Center. It's air conditioned, plenty of bathrooms, and plenty of space.
From the conversation I've heard, the students don't have a problem with Centennial Center, it's the faculty.
- Commencement is for graduates and their loved ones. Giving a commencement address should be an act of service, the main purpose of which is to honor, inspire and encourage the graduates.
- <CR>Brevity is, indeed, the soul of wit

- This survey is incorrect. The Distinguished Professor has been the Spring speaker for some time, and the Distinguished Service recipient spoke at Honors Day. This has only been recently changed.
- I think the faculty should continue to choose the speakers because faculty have more knowledge of potential speakers and are more likely to select speakers that will challenge than would our students

COPLAC Commencement Speakers Survey				
Institution	Student FTE	Selection Method	Payment?	Notes
Keene State	5235	The President's Cabinet nominates individuals to receive honorary degrees. These, according to University System policy, must be approved by the USNH Board of Trustees and meet policy-defined criteria. We generally give two honorary degrees and each honoree is invited to address the audience for 10 minutes. We look to identify honorary degree recipients who have a relationship with the College or who exemplify the campus's goals and values.	We have not paid an honorarium, but we have paid for travel expenses.	The old system involved the officers of the junior class providing a list to the President and the President working from that list. Payments were made in the \$3,000 to \$10,000 range. The students often identified "popular culture" figures such as actors or athletes.
Henderson State	3151	Henderson State traditionally has a distinguished alumni speak at each graduation ceremony. The distinguished alumni are chosen by the alumni association. There is also a faculty charge and a student response at each ceremony. The vice president of academic affairs and the faculty senate choose the faculty member. The student government association chooses the student.	They are not compensated.	
Fort Lewis College	3946	We have a commencement speaker committee that consults with the President. It is made up of the president of the Faculty Senate and two graduating students (appointed by the president of the Associated Students of Fort Lewis College (our name for the student government). After this committee has met and chosen a speaker, the Cabinet then is informed and gives their endorsement or if someone sees a problem, they can voice it at this time. The President's office issues the invitation to the speaker.	If that person has to travel, we pay all expenses and honorarium, if appropriate. We also give a small token/gift from the College.	
Midwestern State University	5544	Our commencement speakers are selected by our president. I have worked for four presidents at this institution and each one has a different method and agenda. We have one commencement ceremony in December and two ceremonies in May. Our current president generally selects state officials/legislators for our fall ceremony, and then chooses alumni for the May ceremonies.	While we do not compensate our speakers, we do provide for their travel expenses, including lodging and meals. I will say, however, that the political figures very seldom accept any reimbursement.	
Eastern Connecticut State University	4178	We receive recommendations from various sources including students and a final decision is made by the President usually with a recommendation from the Vice President for Academic Affairs.	When a commencement speaker is a political figure or someone the University wants to recognize with an honorary degree, there is usually no honorarium. However, when the University sought a commencement speaker from an agency, the University has paid an honorarium which varied from as little as \$2500 to \$15,000 with one exception where the University paid \$30,000.	
College of Charleston	9358	Suggestions are gathered at senior class meetings; President approves final choice. Honorary degree is given, which must be approved by the Board of Trustees. Past speakers include Sallie Krawcheck, Congressmen, Senators, and successful alumni.	No payment; money is better spent on scholarships.	Do not ask to see speech ahead of time.
Montevallo				
University of Maine at Farmington				
Geneseo		If an honorary degree is being presented at Commencement, and if that person is known to be a skilled speaker, that person is first choice. If there is no honorary degree being awarded at the ceremony, the President of the College selects the speaker. He does accept nominations from students, faculty and staff.		

USG Commencement Speakers Survey				
Institution	Student FTE	Selection Method	Payment?	Notes
Clayton College and State University	4208	We have a Graduation Committee which handles most aspects of the ceremony. They make a recommendation on speakers to the President.	Generally, we provide a very nice framed print of the campus to the speaker.	
Gainesville State College	4279	Our commencement speaker is always the SGA President	He/she is not paid.	
Augusta State	4884	We have now moved to only one ceremony in May each year. The president selects the speaker.	No	Prior to May 2005 we held two commencements, one in December and one in May. At the December ceremony the faculty member who had been selected as the Outstanding Faculty Member at our honors convocation the previous March was the speaker. They were not paid and most of them did not consider it an "honor" either ;) Our president would choose the speaker for the May ceremony.
NGCSU	3836	Each year the University recognizes outstanding faculty by granting, among others, an award to the "NGCSU Alumni Association Outstanding Professor" and the "NGCSU Professor of Outstanding Teaching and Learning." We have established the practice of offering these individuals the opportunity to speak at the August and December ceremonies. Given that the faculty members who win the awards are quite adept at presentation, they usually provide an interesting and stimulating message. In the one case where a faculty member requested not to speak, our president delivered the message. Given that the May ceremonies are traditionally the "big" ceremonies, we usually attempt to get a dignitary of some type to deliver the commencement address at those two ceremonies. We have been quite successful in getting U.S. Senators and Representatives to speak, along with some prominent members of the business world. To be honest, the senators and representatives have been the better speakers. While it may seem that offering a politician a public forum would be a recipe for disaster, we have always	Regarding payment for speakers, we have not yet taken the step of paying commencement speakers. There is no policy against honoraria, and we have discussed paying for speakers, but in the end just haven't felt the need to go in that direction.	We do ask the speakers to limit their speech to 12-15 minutes. None have ever exceeded this limit and most use about ten minutes.