The heavy gray clouds that threatened to soak those gathered for the College’s 178th Commencement ceremony could not dampen the spirit of the occasion. Be-decked in black, the procession of graduates marched into the Residential Quad with alacrity on a cool, misty morning to harvest the fruits of four years’ effort.

Surrounded by hundreds of friends and family members, the Class of 2009 was composed of 271 individuals possessing an equal number of unique stories.

While the preponderance of the class was made up of native Georgians, 10 states and four countries were represented among the graduates. At 21.4 years old, Ericka Bermudez was the youngest member of the class, and 69-year-old Mattie Grant was the senior member of the group.

Two parents, Daphne Rivers and Julie Clifton Watson, got to turn their tassels alongside their children, Deondra Rivers and Joshua Watson. And LaGrange College at Albany saw its first master’s degree recipients cross the stage.

On hand to address those assembled was Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin. She told the crowd that when she pondered the meaning of her own graduation years after the fact, she was struck by how big an impact philanthropists had made on her life.

“What it meant is that people that I did not know by name, that people I would never know by name had committed to my education in a way that I could never appreciate,” she said.

“There is no question that I stand here today because other people took special interest both in the college and me, that I might fulfill some of my dreams.”

She encouraged the graduates to try and make a similar mark.

“It’s true that you must support your own family and your friends and your community, but I would ask that you do those things in your life that unnamed people will benefit from your good works.”

Also speaking during the ceremony was Sara Foshee, recipient of this year’s Waight G. Henry, Jr., Leadership Award. She looked back on her time on the Hill and the caring community she witnessed.

“For me, one of the most incredible aspects of LaGrange College is that the people here are willing,” she said. (continued on next page)
“Maybe not always willing to give the grade we wanted in class, but willing to lend a hand, a listening ear—willing to give encouragement and support.”

Four individuals were singled out to receive honorary degrees. Commencement speaker Franklin was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree.

The Rev. Susan Henry-Crowe, this year’s Baccalaureate speaker, received an Honorary Doctor of Divinity Degree.

Also receiving an Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree was Sarajane N. Love, Verner F. Chaffin Distinguished Professor in Fiduciary Law at the University of Georgia.

Departing President Stuart Gulley was surprised with an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters Degree. In a poignant portion of the ceremony, Dr. Gulley’s father, Vanderbilt University Professor Emeritus Dr. Frank Gulley, came on stage to read a citation commending his son’s 13 years of service to the College. And Iowa Wesleyan College President Jay Simmons (formerly Chief Academic Officer at LaGrange) was on hand to bestow the doctorate.

The Distinguished Service Alumni Award winner, Joe Ragland Jr., was recognized during Commencement as well (more on page 21).
Above, President Stuart Gulley accepts the approba-
tion of the crowd during an emotional moment
when the College’s departing 24th president was
surprised with an honorary doctorate. At right, Ha-
waii native Anthony Lusano pauses for a photo follow-
ing the ceremony. Lusano carried on a family tradition
by wearing a lei during Commencement.

At left, Fleming Garner carries the class banner
as she leads her fellow graduates during the
processional. Above, Gaela Duncan, left, and
Morgan Melton pause for a photo before the
Baccalaureate ceremony held at First United
Methodist Church on May 15. Below left, Leon
Williams wears a contented countenance as
he marches into the Residential Quad. Below,
President Gulley shares a moment with the
three women who were awarded honorary
doctorates at this year’s Commencement. They
are, from left, Sarajane N. Love; the Rev. Susan
Henry-Crowe, the Baccalaureate speaker; and
Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin, this year’s Com-
mencement speaker.