HISTORY OF GW’S COMMENCEMENT

• The tradition for an outdoor, university-wide Commencement began in 1992 and was the first such celebration for all graduates in nearly two decades. Previously, individual schools held their own graduation celebrations at on-campus locations, as well as at other Washington, D.C., landmarks, such as DAR Constitution Hall and the National Theater.

• The George Washington University’s first Commencement took place in 1824 when the institution was known as Columbian College and located on College Hill in upper northwest D.C. bordered by 14th and 15th streets, Florida Avenue and Columbia Road. This Commencement was held at the F Street Presbyterian Church, now the site of Washington, D.C.’s Willard Hotel. Gilbert du Motier, the Marquis de Lafayette, was the invited speaker.

• From 1992 through 2005, GW held its Commencement on the Ellipse, with views of the White House and the Washington Monument. In 2006, Commencement moved to the National Mall because of renovations on the Ellipse. Now in our 11th year on the National Mall, this year’s ceremony will take place on the grounds of the Washington Monument.

• To complement Commencement on the National Mall, GW’s 10 academic schools hold individual celebrations for students and their families during Commencement weekend.

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