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Georgia State to kick off first football season in 2010

ATLANTA – Georgia State President Carl Patton announced today that the university will begin football. His announcement received an enthusiastic response from the large crowd of faculty, students, and alumni gathered at the Georgia State Student Center.

The Panthers, who will play at the NCAA Football Championship Subdivision level (formerly known as NCAA Division I-AA), will kick off their inaugural season in 2010 and play their home games at the Georgia Dome.

“I know that many former and current students have dreamed of a day when there would be football Saturdays at Georgia State, and while that might have looked like third-and-long for many years, I think today is a great time for an end-zone celebration,” Patton said.

The long process to bring football to the downtown Atlanta campus began when Patton, at his very first meeting with students at a “Panthers Roundtable” dinner, was asked a question he would hear again many times.

“When I became president of Georgia State 16 years ago, one of the first questions I received was, ‘When are we getting football?’ he said. “I have to admit that my answer was, ‘not in my lifetime.’ But, I also have to admit that my lifetime here lasted longer than I thought it would.”

Shortly after joining the football-sponsoring Colonial Athletic Association in 2005, Georgia State conducted a feasibility study that showed that alumni, students, faculty and staff were in support of adding a football program.

In April of '07, the school hired former National Football League player and coach Dan Reeves as its football consultant. Reeves helped secure more than \$1 million in pledges for a football program.

Last October, the Mandatory Student Fee Committee unanimously approved an increase in the student athletic fee, and shortly after that, the Fiscal Advisory Committee to the President also endorsed the proposed increase. Thus, with overwhelming campus support, Patton forwarded the request to the Board of Regents for approval, which officially came April 15.

Now, Athletic Director Mary McElroy will begin putting together the pieces.

“Building a football program from scratch is a tremendous challenge, but it’s also an incredible opportunity because there is no question that Georgia State football has the potential to be very successful at the FCS level,” she said at today’s announcement.

McElroy says she hopes to have the school’s first head coach in place by summer.

“With the start of our first season about 29 months away, we’re now officially on the clock,” she said. “Our plan is to hire a head football coach and a director of football operations this summer. The head coach will then hire up to four assistant coaches to begin recruiting this fall. Georgia State will sign its first recruiting class in February of 2009.”

Women’s lacrosse, which will help Georgia State maintain gender equity, will likely begin in the fall of 2010, McElroy says.

Georgia State would become the eighth member of the Colonial Athletic Association to have football. Delaware, James Madison, Hofstra, Northeastern, Towson and William & Mary are full-time CAA members, and Old Dominion is slated to begin playing football in 2009. Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Richmond and Villanova play football in the conference as associate members. CAA football programs have enjoyed tremendous success in recent years, including a record five CAA teams qualifying for the 2007 NCAA Playoffs.