ACTION ITEM:

Proposed Revision of the UNCG *Honorary Degree Guidelines and Procedures*

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In July 2012, the Office of the Provost sought the assistance of a research firm to identify policies and procedures at approximately fifteen U.S. institutions related to awarding honorary degrees.

As a result of the research, there were four key revisions proposed for the *Honorary Degree Guidelines and Procedures*:

1. A limitation will be placed on eligibility for selection to include current faculty, staff, and trustees and elected or appointed officials;
2. The solicitation of nominations will be initiated by the Chancellor;
3. A time limit of five years or until award of honorary degree, whichever comes first, shall be placed on approved candidates that remain in the active candidate pool;
4. Additional membership of the University Committee on Honorary Degrees shall include the Chairperson of the Faculty Senate and President of the Student Government Association. The Provost and Vice Chancellor for University Advancement shall serve as ex officio members.

These revisions were subsequently endorsed by the Chancellor.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the Board of Trustees of The University of North Carolina at Greensboro approve the proposed changes to the UNCG *Honorary Degree Guidelines and Procedures*.

David H. Perrin
Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor
HONORARY DEGREE GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES
THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO

(Adopted by Faculty Council, April 16, 1985)
(Guidelines Approved by the Board of Trustees, February 13, 1986)
(Amended by Faculty Council, November 14, 1989)
(Amended by the Board of Trustees, November 21, 1996)
(Amended by the Chancellor, December 1, 2009)
(Pending Approval by the Board of Trustees)

I. Guidelines

A. Honorary degrees at the University, as at other colleges and universities, serve a dual purpose. They both recognize men and women of high achievement and celebrate values that we profess as an institution of higher learning. They are a way of telling the larger public that certain people and accomplishments are important.

B. In choosing individual recipients for these degrees, the one overriding consideration is the distinction of the candidate, though that distinction may be measured in a number of ways.

C. As a public institution we are committed to openness and diversity, and our choices for honorary degrees should express that commitment. Nominees should represent a broad spectrum of noteworthy achievements whether national, regional or local. No calling or career serving a humane purpose should be excluded from consideration, so long as the achievement in question is distinguished. Limitations on eligibility for selection include current faculty, staff, and trustees and elected or appointed public officials.

D. A previous connection to the University or state should be viewed as a strength in a candidate, but to insist upon it for all would be limiting. It is, then, highly desirable but not mandatory.

E. Finally, distinction and diversity are what we should seek. Neither allows for an easy or consistent definition, for like all such terms, they must be defined in practice. There will inevitably be honest disagreement among us as to what they mean and as to those persons who best exemplify them.

II. Honorary Degree Types

Recognized academic degrees shall not be awarded as honorary degrees. Instead, the recognized honorary degree titles shall be used. These titles include, but are not limited to the following:

A. Doctor of Laws (LL.D.): contributions to government or public service.

B. Doctor of Letters (Litt.D.): contributions to literature or the creative or performing arts.
C. Doctor of Science (Sc.D.): contributions to any field of science, social science, engineering or technology.

D. Doctor of Humane Letters (L.H.D.): contributions to the humanities or to human welfare.

III. Procedures

The procedures for proposing and awarding Honorary Degrees are as follows:

A. The honorary degrees committee shall be a University committee appointed by the Chancellor and designated the “University Committee on Honorary Degrees.” The General Faculty of UNCG shall carry out its constitutional duty for recommending individuals for honorary degrees through appointment and participation of faculty members on the University Committee on Honorary Degrees.

B. The solicitation for nominees for honorary degrees shall normally be undertaken in the fall semester of each academic year.

C. Nominations shall be solicited. The Chancellor shall solicit nominations from the faculty, individual members of the Board of Trustees, the Alumni Board, UNCG staff, and the rising senior class. Nominations from other sources will also be accepted. All nominations shall be made in writing in accordance with application guidelines and in strict confidentiality.

D. The University Committee on Honorary Degrees shall be free to make nominations of its own in writing and in accordance with application guidelines and in strict confidentiality.

E. The University Committee on Honorary Degrees shall present its nominations for honorary degrees to the Board of Trustees as specified in Section V below.

F. The University Committee on Honorary Degrees shall maintain a pool of honorees already approved and of certain other nominees for reconsideration. Approved honorary degree candidates shall remain in the active candidate pool for five years or until they are awarded an honorary degree, whichever comes first.

G. The University Committee on Honorary Degrees shall assist the Chancellor in making arrangements for those chosen for such degrees to accept them.

H. Normally the University will present at least one honorary degree each year.

I. Honorary degrees shall be awarded only at the Spring Commencement.

IV. Honorary Degree Committee Membership

The University Committee on Honorary Degrees is appointed by the Chancellor. Its membership shall include four (4) faculty members nominated by the Faculty Senate in the Spring if needed, and approved by majority vote of the Faculty Senate and two (2) trustees selected by the UNCG Board of Trustees. Terms shall be staggered as four-year (academic year) appointments. Additional members of the Committee shall include the Chairperson...
V. Nomination and Approval of Honorary Degrees by the Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is the final authority in granting the honorary degree. As such, they will receive regular reports about the nomination and selection process through the appropriate Trustee committee.

The usual process for the cycle of determining recipients for honorary degrees is noted below. It may be that individuals nominated in one year may be proposed for an honorary degree in the next academic year depending on the number of nominations and other considerations.

- September/October: The Provost and Vice Chancellor for University Advancement will seek nominations of individuals for consideration, setting an appropriate deadline for submission.

- October/December: The Committee will review nominations and seek additional information as may be necessary to complete its work.

- January/February: The Committee will recommend recipients to the Board of Trustees through the appropriate Trustee committee.

The Committee will submit a recommendation to the Board of Trustees of which nominees should receive honorary degrees. The Board of Trustees shall grant final approval of honorary degree recipients.
Policies and Procedures for Awarding Honorary Doctoral Degrees

Custom Research Brief

Research Associate
Erin McDougal

Research Manager
Sarah Moore
LEGAL CAVEAT
The Advisory Board Company has made efforts to verify the accuracy of the information it provides to members. This report relies on data obtained from many sources, however, and The Advisory Board Company cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information provided or any analysis based thereon. In addition, The Advisory Board Company is not in the business of giving legal, medical, accounting, or other professional advice, and its reports should not be construed as professional advice. In particular, members should not rely on any legal commentary in this report as a basis for action, or assume that any tactics described herein would be permitted by applicable law or appropriate for a given member's situation. Members are advised to consult with appropriate professionals concerning legal, medical, tax, or accounting issues, before implementing any of these tactics. Neither The Advisory Board Company nor its officers, directors, trustees, employees and agents shall be liable for any claims, liabilities, or expenses relating to (a) any errors or omissions in this report, whether caused by The Advisory Board Company or any of its employees or agents, or sources or other third parties, (b) any recommendation or graded ranking by The Advisory Board Company, or (c) failure of member and its employees and agents to abide by the terms set forth herein.

The Advisory Board is a registered trademark of The Advisory Board Company in the United States and other countries. Members are not permitted to use this trademark, or any other Advisory Board trademark, product name, service name, trade name and logo, without the prior written consent of The Advisory Board Company. All other trademarks, product names, service names, trade names, and logos used within these pages are the property of their respective holders. Use of other company trademarks, product names, service names, trade names and logos or images of the same does not necessarily constitute (a) an endorsement by such company of The Advisory Board Company and its products and services, or (b) an endorsement of the company or its products or services by The Advisory Board Company. The Advisory Board Company is not affiliated with any such company.

IMPORTANT: Please read the following.
The Advisory Board Company has prepared this report for the exclusive use of its members. Each member acknowledges and agrees that this report and the information contained herein (collectively, the "Report") are confidential and proprietary to The Advisory Board Company. By accepting delivery of this Report, each member agrees to abide by the terms as stated herein, including the following:
1. The Advisory Board Company owns all right, title and interest in and to this Report. Except as stated herein, no right, license, permission or interest of any kind in this Report is intended to be given, transferred to or acquired by a member. Each member is authorized to use this Report only to the extent expressly authorized herein.
2. Each member shall not sell, license or republish this Report. Each member shall not disseminate or permit the use of, and shall take reasonable precautions to prevent such dissemination or use of, this Report by (a) any of its employees and agents (except as stated below), or (b) any third party.
3. Each member may make this Report available solely to those of its employees and agents who (a) are registered for the workshop or membership program of which this Report is a part, (b) agree to access to this Report in order to learn from the information described herein, and (c) agree not to disclose this Report to other employees or agents or any third party. Each member shall use, and shall ensure that its employees and agents use, this Report for its internal use only. Each member may make a limited number of copies, solely as adequate for use by its employees and agents in accordance with the terms herein.
4. Each member shall not remove from this Report any confidential markings, copyright notices and other similar indicia herein.
5. Each member is responsible for any breach of its obligations as stated herein by any of its employees or agents.
6. If a member is unwilling to abide by any of the foregoing obligations, then such member shall promptly return this Report and all copies thereof to The Advisory Board Company.
Table of Contents

I. Research Methodology ................................................................................................................. 4
   Project Challenge ......................................................................................................................... 4
   Project Sources ............................................................................................................................ 4
   Research Parameters .................................................................................................................. 6
II. Executive Overview ..................................................................................................................... 7
   Key Observations ......................................................................................................................... 7
III. Overview of Honorary Degree Policies across Profiled Institutions ................................. 8
   Purpose of Honorary Degrees .................................................................................................. 8
   Selection Criteria ....................................................................................................................... 8
   University System Policies ....................................................................................................... 9
IV. Procedures for Awarding Honorary Degrees ........................................................................ 10
   Nomination Procedures ............................................................................................................. 10
   Honorary Degree Selection Committees .................................................................................. 11
   Approval Procedures .................................................................................................................. 11
   Recognition of Honorary Degree Recipients ............................................................................ 12
I. Research Methodology

Project Challenge  *Leadership at a member institution approached the Council with the following questions:*

- Who comprises honorary degree selection committees at other institutions?
- What is the role of University Advancement in the selection process? What is the role of potential nominees giving history and/or potential in the selection process?
- What is the impact of political background or affiliation on the selection of recipients for public institutions?
- Do selection criteria include contributions to the public good versus or in addition to the institution?
- Is a progression in awards leading to this most prominent recognition necessary for selection?
- Is a connection to the university a prerequisite for the award at other institutions?
- Is the honorary degree selection process a mechanism for identifying the commencement speaker?
- What is the role of the Board of Trustees in selecting or approving the nominations?
- Do students have a role in the selection or is this the domain of the faculty?

Project Sources  *The Council consulted the following sources for this report:*

- Education Advisory Board’s internal and online (www.educationadvisoryboard.com) research libraries
- Institutional web sites
  - Bowling Green State University: BGSU Honorary Degrees (http://www.bgsu.edu/offices/provost/page82271.html)
  - Butler University: Honorary Degree Policy and Procedure (https://umbraco.butler.edu/media/2406684/honorarydegreepolicy.pdf)
  - Florida Atlantic: University Honorary Doctorates (http://www.fau.edu/policies/files/2.3_Honorary_Doctorates__8-10_.pdf)
  - Georgetown University: Policy on the Awarding of Honorary Degrees (http://www.georgetown.edu/about/governance/honorary-degrees/index.html)
  - North Carolina State University: POL 01.30.02 - Honorary Degrees (http://policies.ncsu.edu/policy/pol-01-30-02)
  - Northern Illinois University: Honorary Degrees (http://www.niu.edu/provost/awards/degrees.shtml)
  - Ohio University: Honorary Degree Committee - Charge and Membership (http://www.ohio.edu/standingcommittees/committee.cfm?customel_datapageid_1748687=1749803)
  - State University of New York: Awarding of Honorary Degrees (http://www.suny.edu/sunypp/documents.cfm?doc_id=150)
- State University of New York at Binghamton: Honorary Degree Recipients (http://www2.binghamton.edu/president/previous-honorary-degrees.html)
- University of Florida: Honorary Degree (http://president.ufl.edu/office/honors-awards)
- University of Iowa: University of Iowa Policy on Honorary Degrees (http://www.uiowa.edu/~honorary/policy/index.html)
- University of North Texas: Honorary Degree Awards Policy (http://policy.unt.edu/policy/15-1-16)
- University of Tennessee: Policy and Procedures on Honorary Degrees (http://provost.utk.edu/policies/honorary-degrees)
- University of Wisconsin System: Granting of Degrees, Honors, and Awards (http://www.uwsa.edu/bor/policies/rpd/rpd4-6.htm)
The Council reviewed publically available honorary degree policies from the following public and private institutions:

Guide to the Institutions Profiled in this Brief through Secondary Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Carnegie Classification</th>
<th>Approximate Enrollment (Total/Undergraduate)</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bowling Green State University</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>Research Universities (high research activity)</td>
<td>17,600/15,100</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butler University</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>Master's Colleges and Universities (medium programs)</td>
<td>4,600/3,900</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida Atlantic University</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Research Universities (high research activity)</td>
<td>29,200/24,600</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgetown University</td>
<td>Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>Research Universities (very high research activity)</td>
<td>17,100/7,600</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami University</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>Research Universities (high research activity)</td>
<td>17,400/14,900</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina State University</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Research Universities (very high research activity)</td>
<td>34,800/25,200</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Illinois University</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>Research Universities (high research activity)</td>
<td>23,000/17,300</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio University</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>Research Universities (high research activity)</td>
<td>26,200/21,650</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland State University</td>
<td>Pacific West</td>
<td>Research Universities (high research activity)</td>
<td>28,600/22,800</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State University of New York at Binghamton</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>Research Universities (high research activity)</td>
<td>14,700/11,900</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas A&amp;M University</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Research Universities (very high research activity)</td>
<td>50,200/39,900</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Florida</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Research Universities (very high research activity)</td>
<td>49,600/32,600</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Iowa</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>Research Universities (very high research activity)</td>
<td>29,800/21,600</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of North Texas</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Research Universities (high research activity)</td>
<td>37,800/29,900</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Tennessee</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Research Universities (very high research activity)</td>
<td>30,200/21,200</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>Research Universities (high research activity)</td>
<td>29,350/24,300</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Center for Education Statistics
II. Executive Overview

Key Observations

The selection criteria outlined in most profiled honorary degree policies include distinguished scholarly or artistic achievements; regional, national or international contributions to the public arena; and/or substantial contributions to the university and the university community. Only two profiled institutions require association with the university as a prerequisite for an honorary degree nomination. In addition, one institution system requires that at least half of the selected candidates have some connection with the university system, the city, or the state. Five profiled institutions only grant preference to individuals with meaningful connections to the state or the university. No profiled honorary degree policy states that an individual must receive a progression of awards to be eligible.

Most profiled institutions do not allow current university employees, students, or trustees, elected or appointed public officials, and past or future university benefactors to be nominated. One profiled institution explicitly forbids the awarding of honorary degrees to current public officials or political appointees at the national, state, or local government levels. In contrast, two profiled institutions only restrict the nomination of elected officials to the local or state governments who may retain jurisdiction over the university system. Additionally, five of the sixteen profiled institutions explicitly state that individuals in consideration for any past, present, or future donations to the university cannot receive honorary degrees.

Eight of the sixteen profiled institutions accept nominations from any member of the university community, including students, faculty, staff, alumni, council members, trustees, and friends of the university. In contrast, one profiled institution only permits current faculty members to nominate individuals for honorary degrees. The typical honorary degree nomination package must be submitted to the university president and include a letter of nomination, multiple letters of recommendation, and the nominee’s bibliographical statement in the form of a curriculum vitae, resume, or biography.

Across profiled institutions, typical honorary degree selection committees consist of nine members including the following: tenured faculty members elected by various constituents (e.g., faculty senate, provost, university president, and vice president for research), senior administrators, lower level administrators and staff, and campus community members. Most commonly, the honorary degree committee includes the provost, faculty members, board of trustees members, and one or two students. Only one profiled institution includes a staff member from university advancement in the honorary degree selection committee.

Across profiled institutions, common honorary degree candidate approval processes involve the selection committee, faculty senate, university president, and board of trustees. 14 of the 16 profiled institutions require final approval for all honorary degree candidates from the board of trustees; in contrast, the president at two institutions retains final approval, following the recommendations by the honorary degree committee and faculty senate. Only three profiled institutions limit the number of honorary degree nominations allowed for final approval, ranging from two to five candidates. Additionally, eight of the sixteen profiled institutions explicitly limit the number of honorary degrees that an institution may award during any given commencement ceremony or academic year, ranging from two to six recipients.

Although most profiled institutions expect an honorary degree recipient to deliver brief remarks at commencement, no policy explicitly states that the honorary degree selection process may be used as a mechanism for identifying the commencement speaker. Two profiled institution policies state that commencement speakers may be nominated for honorary degrees but must still meet the stated eligibility requirements and acquire approval through the same nomination process as the other candidates.
III. Overview of Honorary Degree Policies across Profiled Institutions

Purpose of Honorary Degrees

Institutions of higher education award honorary degrees as an extension of their mission to facilitate the discovery, transmission, and preservation of knowledge. Across profiled institutions, university policies state the following additional purposes for awarding honorary doctoral degrees:

- To recognize individuals who demonstrate extraordinary achievement over their entire scholarly or artistic careers or who have performed distinguished public service in their lifetime. The honorary degree is not meant to award an individual for a singular deed or accomplishment.
- To recognize excellence in the scholarly fields of degrees awarded by the university as well as those that exemplify the history and mission of the university.
- To honor those individuals whose lives and achievements are consistent with the qualities and values espoused by the university in order to provide examples of the university’s aspirations for its graduates.
- To elevate the visibility and reputation of the university by honoring those individuals who are widely known and regarded in their field or in society as a whole.

Selection Criteria

Most profiled honorary degree policies provide two to three concrete selection criteria, consistent with their stated purpose, which candidates must meet in order to receive a recommendation for an award. Several policies emphasize the importance of awarding honorary degrees to women, minorities, and those that have not received past awards. However, the majority of policies outline broad criteria in order to increase the breadth of the candidate pool each year. Across profiled institutions, individuals must satisfy one or more of the following criteria in order to receive an honorary degree:

Honorary Degree Recipient Selection Criteria

- Individuals with distinguished intellectual, scholarly, or creative achievements throughout the course of their entire careers.
- Individuals with regional, national or international recognition and contributions to the public arena that have enhanced society as a whole or have brought significant benefit to particular groups.
- Individuals who have made substantial contributions to the university and its community.
- Individuals with noteworthy and significant associations or relationships with the university, or particularly close connections between their achievements and the mission of the university.

Only Georgetown University and the University of North Texas require association with the university as a prerequisite for an honorary degree nomination. In addition, the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee requires that at least half of the selected candidates have some connection with the university system, the city of Milwaukee, or the state of Wisconsin. However, five profiled institutions only grant preference to individuals with meaningful connections to the state or the university.

Limitations on Eligibility

× **Current Employees or Students:** At most profiled institutions, current faculty, staff, trustees, and students are ineligible for consideration for an honorary degree until they have separated from the university for two or more years.

× **Elected or Appointed Public Officials:** Eleven of the sixteen profiled institutions partially limit or prohibit nominations for elected or appointed public officials as well as candidates for office. The University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee explicitly forbids the awarding of honorary degrees to current public officials or political appointees at the national, state, or local government levels.¹ In contrast, North Carolina State University and SUNY at Binghamton only restrict the nomination of elected officials to the local or state governments who may retain jurisdiction over the university system.² The honorary degree policy at Ohio University does not ban the awarding of honorary degrees to these individuals but recommends they be awarded sparingly.³ No honorary degree policy states that individuals with certain political backgrounds or affiliations are ineligible, as long as they do not currently maintain an active campaign or hold office.

× **University Benefactors:** Five of the sixteen profiled institutions explicitly state that individuals in consideration for any past, present, or future donations to the university cannot receive honorary degrees. In contrast, the Ohio University policy states that outstanding benefactors to the university should be given “special attention.”⁴

× **Posthumous Nomination:** Only Texas A&M University explicitly forbids the awarding of an honorary degree posthumously, but both the University of North Texas and SUNY at Binghamton recommend posthumous awards be granted under exceptional circumstances.⁵

### University System Policies

**Most University Systems Provide Honorary Degree Guidelines for Campuses**

All profiled institutions within university system of governance must follow guidelines established by the system for awarding honorary degrees. The level of detail in these policies and procedures varies by system; for example, the University of Tennessee system prescribes a general honorary degree policy and each affiliated institution may establish their own procedures for submitting and approving nominations.⁶ In contrast, the State University of New York system provides detailed procedures for each affiliated institution to follow when awarding honorary degrees. Due to the large size of the university system, SUNY confers honorary degrees at the system level through an approval process that involves system-level administrators, appointed faculty members, and the Board of Trustees. Although the honorary degrees are conferred at the system level, candidates are awarded honorary degrees during individual institution commencement ceremonies at the institution from which their nomination originated. The complex and multi-step approval procedures require the SUNY system to maintain a more detailed policy that each affiliated institution must follow.⁷

---

⁴ “Honorary Degree Committee - Charge and Membership,” Ohio University.
⁷ “Awarding of Honorary Degrees,” State University of New York.
IV. Procedures for Awarding Honorary Degrees

Nomination Procedures

Most Institutions Allow the Entire University Community to Nominate Candidates

Eight of the sixteen profiled institutions allow nominations from any member of the university community, including students, faculty, staff, alumni, council members, trustees, and friends of the university; Florida Atlantic University allows the general public to submit nominations as well. In contrast, the University of Tennessee only permits current faculty members to nominate individuals for honorary degrees.

Required Materials for Nomination Packages

* Most commonly required materials across profiled institutions

- Standard Nomination Form: A standardized form that includes nominator and nominee contact information as well as authorization signatures, when applicable
- Letter of Nomination*: A short letter that describes the candidate’s achievements and how they relate to the institution’s specific selection criteria
- Biographical Information*: In the form of a biography, curriculum vitae, or resume
- Letters of Recommendation*: Typically from three to six individuals, both internal and external to the university; in contrast, the University of North Texas does not accept letters of recommendation in nomination packages.
- Supporting Articles: Nominators may submit newspaper articles, reviews, or additional materials that describe the nominee’s work and contributions.
- Conflict of Interest Information: At the University of Tennessee, nominators must explain their relationship with the nominees and reveal any potential conflicts of interest.

The Office of the President Receives Nomination Packages at Most Institutions

Most honorary degree policies at profiled institutions request that the university community send nomination packages to the office of the president, typically a few months before the next commencement ceremony. However, at SUNY at Binghamton, Texas A&M University, and the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee nominators must send packages to the dean of their academic department or non-departmentalized school or college for submission. In addition, Bowling Green State University, Miami University, and the University of Iowa require that nominators submit their packages to the Provost’s office, the Secretary of the Faculty Senate, and directly to the Honorary Degree Committee, respectively.

---

Florida Atlantic University may conduct full background checks of honorary degree nominees and factor the findings into the candidate evaluation process.


---

8 “Honorary Doctorates,” Florida Atlantic University, http://www.fau.edu/policies/files/2.3_Honorary_Doctorates__8-10_.pdf.
9 “Policy and Procedures on Honorary Degrees,” University of Tennessee.
Across profiled institutions, honorary degree selection committees are typically composed of tenured faculty members elected by various constituents (e.g., faculty senate, provost, university president, and vice president for research), senior administrators, lower level administrators and staff, and campus community members. Most commonly, the honorary degree committee includes the provost, faculty members, board of trustees members, and one or two students. Only the University of North Texas includes a staff member from the Division of University Advancement in the honorary degree selection committee. In contrast, the Academic Committee of the Board of Directors at Georgetown University, composed of various board of trustees members, reviews all honorary degree nominations.

### Common Honorary Degree Committee Members across Profiled Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Senior Administrators</th>
<th>Faculty Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Members:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Members:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University System President</td>
<td>Tenured Faculty Members***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University President*</td>
<td>Full/Associate Faculty Members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provost**</td>
<td>Chair/Vice Chair of the Faculty Senate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President for Student Affairs</td>
<td>Distinguished University Professors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President for University Relations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrators and Staff</th>
<th>Campus Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Members:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Members:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Deans</td>
<td>Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Affairs Staff</td>
<td>Board of Trustees Members*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Council Representative</td>
<td>Undergraduate Students*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni Association Representative</td>
<td>Graduate Students*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Advancement Staff</td>
<td>Alumni</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These representatives serve on committees at three to five profiled institutions.
** These representatives serve on committees at five to nine profiled institutions.
*** These representatives serve on committees at more than ten profiled institutions.

### Approval Procedures

Across profiled institutions, the most common honorary degree candidate approval process involves the selection committee, faculty senate, university president, and board of trustees. 14 of the 16 profiled institutions require final approval for all honorary degree candidates from the board of trustees; in contrast, the Presidents at Portland State University and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee retain final approval power following the recommendations by the Honorary Degree Committee and Faculty Senate.

---

12 “Honorary Degree Awards Policy,” University of North Texas.
Typical Process for Honorary Degree Candidate Approval

The honorary degree selection committee reviews all nomination packages and forwards their recommendations to the faculty senate. The faculty senate votes on each candidate and forwards those with majority approval to the university president for review. The university president reviews the approved candidates and forwards the final candidates to the board of trustees. At 14 of the 16 profiled institutions, the board of trustees retains grants approval of honorary degree recipients.

Limitations on Number of Honorary Degree Nominations and Awards

Only three profiled institutions limit the number of honorary degree nominations allowed for final approval, ranging from two to five candidates. Additionally, eight of the sixteen profiled institutions explicitly limit the number of honorary degrees that an institution may award during any given commencement ceremony or academic year, ranging from two to six recipients. The State University of New York system does not award more than 75 honorary degrees each academic year and limits the number of honorary degrees given by each campus to four awards.

Sources: “Awarding of Honorary Degrees,” State University of New York.

Recognition of Honorary Degree Recipients

Most Profiled Institutions Require Honorary Degree Recipients to Attend Commencement

At most profiled institutions, honorary degree recipients must attend commencement in order to receive their honorary doctorate during that academic year. If a recipient cannot attend the ceremony, then administrators may decide to delay his or her award until the subsequent commencement. Additionally, several profiled institutions allow approved candidates to remain active for several years; for example, approved honorary degree candidates at Butler University remain in the active candidate pool for five years or until they are awarded an honorary degree, whichever comes first.\(^ {15} \) Those candidates nominated for but not awarded an honorary degree at North Carolina State University retain active status for an additional academic year before their candidacy requires re-approval from the Board of Trustees.\(^ {16} \)

Types of Honorary Degrees

- Doctor of Humane Letters (L.H.D.)
- Doctor of Science (Sc.D.)
- Doctor of Laws (LL.D.)
- Doctor of Fine Arts (D.F.A)
- Doctor of Literature (Litt.D.)
- Doctor of Music (Mus.D.)

\(^ {15} \) “Honorary Degree Policy and Procedure,” Butler University, https://umbraco.butler.edu/media/2406684/honorarydegreepolicy.pdf.

\(^ {16} \) “POL 01.30.02 - Honorary Degrees,” North Carolina State University.
No Policy States that Honorary Degree Recipients Should Deliver the Commencement Address

Although most profiled institutions expect an honorary degree recipient to deliver brief remarks at commencement, no policy explicitly states that the honorary degree selection process may be used as a mechanism for identifying the commencement speaker. Only four profiled institutions mention commencement speakers in the honorary degree policy:

- The Ohio University and State University of New York system policies state that commencement speakers may be nominated for honorary degrees but must still meet the stated eligibility requirements and acquire approval through the same nomination process as the other candidates.17
- The University of North Texas policy states that an honorary degree recipient “may or may not be asked to present a commencement address.”18
- Finally, the Butler University policy recommends that committees grant special consideration to the preferences of the student body prior to inviting a commencement speaker.19

---

17 “Honorary Degree Committee - Charge and Membership,” Ohio University; “Awarding of Honorary Degrees,” State University of New York.
18 “Honorary Degree Awards Policy,” University of North Texas.
19 “Honorary Degree Policy and Procedure,” Butler University.