**Senate Task Force on the Role of Honorary Degrees in a Modern [Contemporary] University**

**Written Report**

12.06.2021

Charge: The *Senate Task Force on the Role of Honorary Degrees in a Modern University* has been assembled with the intent of creating a report on the topic of the current and future roles and practices surrounding honorary degrees. This charge is intentionally broad in scope and the committee has been given the latitude to examine any matter reasonably related to this charge. The *Task Force* is further charged with submitting a written report summarizing findings, recommendations, and the rationale for recommendations to the Academic Senate no later than December 2021.

Executive Summary: The *Senate Task Force on the Role of Honorary Degrees in a Modern [Contemporary] University* conducted a thorough review of practices and related considerations for awarding honorary degrees. Committee members represented diverse perspectives on this topic and deliberations were candid, direct, and respectful. The committee gathered information from a variety of sources in pursuit of responding to the charge provided by the Academic Senate leadership.

General findings of the group include clarifying that conferring of honorary degrees is generally practiced among contemporary universities with a few notable exceptions. The process for selecting recipients varies, with the role of faculty and students likewise varying across institutions. The purpose of honorary degrees also varies in detail, but generally aligns with the University of Utah position that this practice is designed to bring honor to recipients and the institution. The number of honorary degrees awarded appears to have increased in past decades. Controversies related to conferring honorary degrees exist and, in some cases, have been high profile, introducing an element of risk to institutions that make these awards.

Recommendations by the committee ranged from discontinuation to continuation of awarding honorary degrees. Opinions and perspectives differed on many recommendations, yet the committee was aligned on ensuring that if honorary degrees are awarded, the selection process should be inclusive and that nominated individuals and their accomplishments should be diverse. Further, the committee recommended that the process for selecting and awarding degrees should be transparent, with the selection process and authority under which honorary degrees are awarded be clearly communicated.

Introduction: To gain further insight into considerations regarding the role of the conferral of honorary degrees in contemporary institutions of higher education, the Academic Senate (academic year 2021), under the direction of President Randy Dryer, established an *ad hoc* committee named the *Senate Task Force on the Role of Honorary Degrees in a Modern University.* Membership on this committee includes representation from faculty, students, staff, alumni, and trustees (see the list of *Task Force Members* below with their primary University of Utah affiliations).

The *Senate Task Force on the Role of Honorary Degrees in a Modern University* commenced during Spring Semester 2021 to respond to a charge provided by Academic Senate leadership. Invitation to serve on this *ad hoc* committee was also determined by Academic Senate leadership with the reported intention to get a broad array of perspectives and input.

Deliberations of this committee have been candid, direct, and respectful as the role of honorary degrees in contemporary universities has been explored. Multiple ideas about the aspects of this charge were discussed, and from the onset, the priority was to reflect the various perspectives rather than attempting to achieve consensus. The intent of this report is to capture the committee’s findings.

Various members of the committee have contributed sections of this report, with the narrative reflecting input on topics germane to this subject. The format reflects responses to the following:

1. *National and state landscape for awarding honorary degrees – survey of PAC- 12, AAU and USHE institutions*
2. *Rationale for awarding honorary degrees*
3. *Recommendations for awarding honorary degrees*
4. *Potential alternatives to awarding honorary degrees*

Honorary degrees have been an ongoing element of many institutions of higher education including the University of Utah. This tradition has been established as a way for institutions to acknowledge the notable accomplishments of selected individuals to honor them and in turn, to honor these institutions and to enhance their stature. Questions of late have arisen as controversies have emerged with some notable recipients leading some to call this process into question while others have held that the conferring honorary degrees should continue despite occasional challenges.

Findings from the committee follow.

1. National and state landscape for awarding honorary degrees – survey of Pac-12, AAU and USHE institutions:

The Task Force used two primary avenues to collect information on practices regarding the conferral of honorary degrees at other institutions: (1) searching institutional websites for all American Association of Universities (AAU), Pacific Athletic Conference-12 (Pac-12), and Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) members and (2) queries directly to academic senate leaders at Pac-12 and USHE institutions. The results of the search of institutional websites are reported in Table I, which incorporates data from the direct query for Pac-12 institutions in the AAU.

The query to academic senate leaders was as follows:

*As consequence of some recent controversies originated in the selection of honorary degrees awardees, the University of Utah Academic Senate has formed an [sic] special committee to study these issues. The basic questions for the committee are i) What is the value for the institution to award honorary degrees in the post BLM and pandemic era and ii) if we are to continue awarding honorary degrees, what are the mechanisms that should be in place to guarantee faculty input in the selection process. I do not know if your institutions are addressing similar issues, but if they are I will gratefully appreciate if you can drop an e-mail telling us what you are doing on this front.*

* 1. What do Pac-12 schools and other AAU peers do in this space?

Resources include:

* + 1. Policies and Procedures for Awarding Honorary Doctoral Degrees, University Leadership Council, Education Advisory Board (2012)
    2. Honorary Degrees at Universities (Updated April 17, 2021) [see Appendix Table 1]

Not all institutions queried provide information on their websites on honorary degrees. The information in the table and below reflects institutions for which information is available.

Two AAU institutions were founded with an explicit principle of not conferring honorary degrees: the University of Virginia and MIT. Of note, Virginia does award the Thomas Jefferson Foundation Medal, which is not associated with a degree.

Four AAU institutions no longer award honorary degrees: Cornell, Rice, Stanford, and CalTech. Like Virginia, CalTech has an award not associated with a degree.

Although the University of California (including all campuses) has a formal policy for honorary degrees, the institution implemented a moratorium on granting honorary degrees in 1972, which was renewed in 1986 and 2005.

Twenty-three institutions award honorary degrees through a process similar to the University of Utah, including input from faculty and a final decision by the President, Board of Trustees, or equivalent. Three institutions have a similar process and require multiple letters of recommendation. One institution does not accept nominations for which letters of recommendation are received from individuals with no institutional affiliation.

Five institutions require final approval by the Academic Senate (or equivalent): McGill, Ohio State, Tulane, Florida, Wisconsin.

Nineteen institutions provide honorary degrees but provide no information on the selection process on their website.

* 1. What do other USHE institutions do in this space?

Four USHE institutions provided additional details beyond the information found in Appendix Table I as follows:

Snow College

At Snow College, it was reported that faculty have never had input on honorary degrees, but based on the query for this report, may consider this in the future.

Salt Lake Community College

At SLCC it was reported that the Board of Trustees has a subcommittee that makes the decision. The respondent was unaware of representation outside of this group.

Dixie State University

The questions posed in this query have reportedly not been addressed at Dixie State. However, interest was expressed in the findings from the work by the University of Utah Academic Senate *ad hoc* committee. The respondent also recommended that AAUP may have useful insights.

Weber State University

It was reported that Weber State has a standing faculty senate committee named 'Honorary Degrees.' This group comprises 4 to 5 faculty members (appointed by the faculty senate) who then become part of a much larger Honorary Degree Committee (which it estimated to consist of about 20 members). This ensures systematic faculty input.

* 1. What are the current policies or laws governing the awarding of honorary degrees in Utah?
     1. *Utah Code 53B-2-103*: “Degree-granting institution board of trustees – Powers and duties.” Subsection 2 of this section of the Utah Code provides that a “board of trustees of a degree-granting institution has the following powers and duties . . . (d) to select recipients of honorary degrees.” Under this law, the University of Utah Board of Trustees has the power, and perhaps the duty, to select recipients of honorary degrees.
     2. *R492 Honorary Degrees* (USHE Policies): This rule notes that “Utah Code 53B-2-103 designates the institutional Boards of Trustees as having the responsibility for ‘selecting those persons to be the recipients of honorary degrees to be granted by the institution.’” It further sets forth the “major purposes of honorary degrees,” which are (1) to recognize someone who has achieved distinction and has made unusual contributions to their professional field, higher education in general, or to a specific educational institution; (2) to bring honor to both the recipient and the institution; and (3) to reward past donations and/or to develop future donation opportunities (usually combined with purposes 1 and 2 above).
     3. *UU Policy 9-002: Honorary Degrees*: The policy requires that the President recommend the recipients and the Board of Trustees approve the recipients of honorary degrees. It reaffirms that “honorary degrees are awarded to individuals who have achieved unusual distinction in service to the University and/or society in such areas as research, scholarship, education, the arts, humanities, the professions, business, government service, civic affairs, human rights, humanitarian outreach, social activism, innovation and invention.” It further notes that the “selection of honorary degree recipients should be made in a manner that will bring honor to both the recipients and the university,” and that “honorary degrees generally will be awarded only at official commencements or at special convocations held on the campus of the University.”
     4. *UU Procedure 9-002: Honorary Degrees*: Anyone may nominate an individual for an honorary degree by submitting a nomination to the Secretary to the University. The submission should be made in writing or electronically. This Procedure sets out the deadlines for submissions and the information to be provided regarding the nominee. It outlines the selection and approval process as follows: “The Secretary to the University will submit the list of nominees to the Honors Committee of the Board of Trustees. This committee, in consultation with the President and Vice President for Institutional Advancement, will make its selection of honorary degree recipients and submit its choice(s) to the full Board of Trustees for final approval.”
  2. What has been the historical practice of awarding honorary degrees at the University of Utah?
     1. Honorary Degree Process – Observations from University Leadership Council Brief – Policies and Procedures for Awarding Honorary Doctoral Degrees

Since 1892, the University of Utah has conferred honorary degrees to individuals who have achieved unusual distinction in service to the University and/or society in such areas as research, scholarship, education, the arts, humanities, the professions, business, government service, civic affairs, human rights, humanitarian outreach, social activism, innovation, and invention. Current members of the Utah Board of Higher Education, current members of the University of Utah Board of Trustees, and current members of the University of Utah faculty and staff are not eligible to be awarded an honorary doctorate. Members of the University of Utah Board of Trustees expend substantial time and energy in the formal selection process for honorary degrees. Trustees see the awarding of an honorary degree as an extension of their mission to facilitate the discovery and transmission of knowledge.

Following Commencement and at the beginning of fall semester, a call for honorary degree nominations is distributed to the university community, including students, faculty, staff, alumni, trustees, and friends of the University of Utah. The University of Utah also encourages the public to submit nominations.

The Board of Trustees bylaws state that the Honorary Degree Selection Committee include representatives of the faculty, the student body, and the Board of Trustees. Typically, this committee receives 20 to 25 nominations annually. From this pool of distinguished nominees, the committee will select the nominees to be forwarded to the University President for selection.

Nominations for this honor follow a multi-step submittal process. The first submittal is the completion of the nomination form along with a brief biographical sketch of the nominee and specific information about the nominee’s relationship to the University of Utah. Strong nominations from previous years are also carried forward for consideration.

As needed, and at the discretion of the Honorary Degree Selection Committee, advocates for the nominees selected from the first round of applicants may be asked to submit a second, more complete application package. This submittal is to provide expanded detail regarding the significance and accomplishments of the candidate.

Beginning in 2017, an informal process was outlined for assembly of an additional vetting committee consisting of members from the Department of Marketing and Communication; University of Utah Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion; the office of the VP for Student Affairs; representation from the University’s Office of General Counsel; and current and past Academic Senate Presidents who convene to conduct a more thorough vetting and review of proposed degree recipients. It is also proposed that these participants also participate in an open dialogue with the Chair of the Honorary Degree Committee and committee members; after which the final recommendations are forwarded to the President for final consideration. (*It was noted by some members of the Academic Senate ad hoc committee on honorary degrees that this process has not been consistently followed.*)

1. Rationale for awarding honorary degrees:
   1. What is or should be the purpose(s) of honorary degrees in a modern university?

Honorary degrees began as “a form of mutual patronage, offering privileges to those who might return the favour to the institution through funding or political support” (Hannah Forsyth, Lecturer in History, Australian Catholic University; <https://www.higheredjobs.com/articles/articleDisplay.cfm?ID=1063>).

The first honorary degree was awarded by Oxford University, in 1478, to Lionel Woodville, head of the Cathedral Church of Saint Peter and brother-in-law to King Edward IV. Shortly thereafter, he became Chancellor of the University (<https://priceonomics.com/why-do-colleges-give-out-honorary-degrees/>). Increase Mather received the first honorary degree in North America, from Harvard, in 1692, just before he was named President. Mather had a BA from Harvard and an MA from Trinity College, Dublin, but he had never earned a PhD.

The number of honorary degrees granted has increased substantially over the past 20 years. Harvard, for example, gave one honorary degree per year from 1753-1972, 1 to 4 per year for the next 40 years, and has given 9 to10 per year since then. It may not be unreasonable, given the enormous increase in both university size and world population since 1753, but it is notable. (<https://priceonomics.com/why-do-colleges-give-out-honorary-degrees/>).

The nomenclature for honorary degrees is D. (Discipline), e.g. D.Litt, rather than PhD, MD, etc. One longstanding area of controversy is whether a *doctorate honoris causa* entitles an individual to call themselves “Dr.” There is a long history of honorees insisting on the use of the title, including Benjamin Franklin, who received the first of his seven honorary degrees in 1756, and preferred to be called “Dr. Franklin,” and Maya Angelou, who often referred to herself as “Dr. Angelou.” In general, however, that practice is discouraged. Many awarding universities include language on their website to this effect, such as “It is not customary, however, for recipients of an honorary doctorate to adopt the prefix 'Dr.'” (https://priceonomics.com/why-do-colleges-give-out-honorary-degrees/).

Based both on material reviewed regarding the granting of honorary degrees in the US and feedback from colleagues in different countries (UK, Belgium, Portugal, the Netherlands, and Israel) the question of granting honorary degrees is at a crossroads of sorts. That is the result of different factors, including----but not limited to----perception amongst faculty that awards are granted on a “pay to play” basis; subsequent fall-out when criminal (or immoral) behavior comes to light regarding the recipient; a perception that the original intent for such recognition has given way to considerations not reflective of the academic purpose, or goals, of a university.

On the other hand, honorary degrees can be an important way to recognize significant contributions, whether academic or otherwise that justify public recognition and acclaim. In addition, honorary degrees provide institutions a mechanism to acknowledge those whose beneficence is important, if not essential. The challenge is that for some, the existing model is causing increasing unease or objection while there remains acknowledgment that it is important to have a mechanism for recognizing individuals beyond the narrowly defined academic mission.

* 1. What are the potential benefits and drawbacks to a university awarding honorary degrees?

There are several thoughts on the benefits and drawbacks to a university awarding honorary degrees. It was acknowledged by committee members that both exist, but there were also differences in perspectives on how to consider these factors when considering the question of the role of honorary degrees. Below is a list of sample benefits and drawbacks:

* + 1. Benefits
       1. It is an important way for the University of Utah to honor and recognize exceptional service and accomplishments by exemplary, noteworthy individuals. The award brings esteem to the recipients and the institution.
       2. The award furthers the institution’s desire to recognize and support those who foster public good.
       3. It also helps to showcase excellence associated with the institution and to market the university to the larger community.
       4. Honorees are typically required to accept their degree in person, which adds to the celebratory environment of commencement.
       5. Many honorees are willing to give graduation addresses. Graduates may take pride when admired graduation speakers are given an honorary degree.
       6. Hearing the inspiring stories of the honorary degree recipients can encourage graduates to make their own mark on the world.
       7. It is seen as the biggest public honor that the University can bestow and is an incentive for deeper engagement. Being awarded an honorary degree is a transformative recognition for the recipients.
       8. Receipt of an honorary degree may be a catalyst for donations to the University.
       9. Such recognition can be a reputation builder for the Institution.
       10. Having the practice allows the University to recognize a wide variety of people including those from underrepresented communities and provides an opportunity to support the University’s EDI efforts.
    2. Drawbacks
       1. Confusion about qualifications of recipients.
       2. Embarrassment if the recipient participates in behavior unbecoming of the University of Utah.
       3. Community pressure (in support or opposition to withdrawing the recognition).
       4. President Thomas Jefferson called the degrees “meaningless credentials.” If anyone should know, he should, although he accepted an honorary law degree from Harvard.
       5. There is no separation between wealth/donations/donors and influential scientists, engineers, historians, etc.
       6. People who hold egalitarian views on merit tend not to support this practice.
       7. Early awarding of honorary degrees included those that were bestowed as a form of mutual patronage. Current practices include awarding of honorary degrees to generate publicity with universities competing for celebrity honorees.
  1. Does it make sense for modern universities to continue the practice of awarding honorary degrees?

Committee member perspectives on whether it makes sense for a contemporary university to continue to award honorary degrees was mixed. For some, the drawbacks and reputational risks were considered too high to continue this practice. For others, the benefits and importance of the role of honorary degrees were sufficient to continue despite potential drawbacks. Regardless of the position on this question, there was consensus that the process can be more inclusive to recognize a broader array of accomplishments and contributions.

1. Recommendations for awarding honorary degrees:
   1. Should there be published eligibility criteria and guidelines for the nomination and selection of honorary degrees and, if so, what are the recommended criteria and guidelines?

It is difficult to determine what criteria should be used to select honorary degree recipients. Guidelines across institutions are general, with decisions for recipients typically being up to the judgement of a selection committee or multi-committee process. It was suggested by members of the Academic Senate *ad hoc* Committee on Honorary Degrees that determination of selection criteria should be up to the selection body (which at the University of Utah is the Board of Trustees) and that the process by which criteria are set and selections are made be transparent.

* 1. What approval process should be utilized in nominating and selecting recipients?

Criteria for who is eligible to nominate honorary degree candidates are generally broad. Some institutions require that nominations ultimately come through a select set of university-affiliated individuals. At the University of Utah, nominations may come from students, faculty, administrators, deans, alumni, and members of the general public.

Recommendations for honorary degree recipients vary, with some institutions having an extensive process and some making decisions on a more centralized basis. At the University of Utah, recommendations are made to the Board of Trustees Honors Committee which then passes on its proposed list of recipients. The Honors Committee is made up of six members, including the president of the Alumni Association, who serves as chair, and the ASUU president. The Trustees Executive Committee selects three Board of Trustees members and one faculty representative. Committee members, other than the ASUU president, serve two-year terms.

* 1. What titles should be available for conferral?

Members of the Academic Senate *ad hoc* Committee on Honorary Degrees suggested care be taken when considering the titles associated with conference of honorary degrees. The name of an honorary degree should align with the distinction for which it is being conferred. Areas of distinction may align with a particular academic field or discipline (*Doctor of Engineering, Doctor of Fine Arts, Doctor of Laws,* etc.) or to type of distinction (*Doctor of Humanitarian Pursuits, Doctor of Public Service,* etc.).

* 1. Should there be a limitation on the number of honorary degrees that may be awarded in a year?

As previously noted, the number of honorary degrees has risen over the past decades. While it is difficult to determine an exact number of honorary degrees conferred, it was discussed that limiting the number each year is needed to retain the distinction of such recognition. The University of Utah does not have a specific limit of how many degrees can be offered each year, however, according to *Policy 9-002: Honorary Degrees, III.B.1*, “No limit is set on the number of honorary degrees that may be awarded, but the number should never become so large as to diminish their significance or importance.”

* 1. How and when should honorary degrees be awarded?

Suggestions were made to outline more explicitly who should be eligible for the distinction of an honorary degree. Some of the recommendations are as follows:

* + 1. An honorary degree should be awarded to an outstanding individual who satisfies one or more of the following criteria:
       1. Eminence, throughout one’s career, in some field of scholarship or scholarly advancement, business innovation, and/or community impact; and
       2. Significance, for recognition by the University of Utah, in the form of an association or relationship with the University or a valued relationship between the individual’s achievements and the mission of the University of Utah.
       3. Life’s work represents the highest values of the University of Utah’s identity, and its mission to advance research and scholarship.
       4. Lifetime, this work should be recognized toward the later stages of the person’s career. Thus, it is intended to represent a lifetime of extraordinary achievement.

Possible language associated with the conference of an honorary degree could be as follows:

On recommendation of the Honors Committee and the President, the Board of Trustees may vote to confer [honorary degrees] on distinguished individuals. The Board should award an [honorary degree] only in recognition of extraordinary and lasting distinction. The award should represent the highest quality of the University’s values.

1. The awarding of an [honorary degree] is recognition of a person whose life and achievements serve as examples of the University’s aspirations for its students.
2. An [honorary degree] may be offered to a person who has contributed significantly to the cultural, scientific, and/or social development of the state, nation, or world. The contribution should be sustained over a period of years and should be lasting in nature. One should be able to document the local, national, or international impact of the contributions. The mere holding of an executive position, public office, or professorship for many years is not sufficient. The creativity of the individual and the extraordinary character of the contributions must be evident.
3. The individual receiving an honorary degree should have a sustained reputation over a period of years. The reputation should be known beyond the boundaries of the University. Attention will be given to individuals who have been impactful nationally and internationally. Letters of recommendation should manifest the broadness of that reputation.
4. The activities of the individual should contain outstanding contributions in research, teaching and learning, the arts, public or community service, or business. Evaluation will be based on the level of intellectual and professional attainment and the significance of the contributions to the enrichment and/or welfare of the state, nation, or world.
5. The Committee will seek to maintain a balance among various fields of activity, both in a given calendar year and in a cycle of years. A program in the awarding of [honorary degrees] should maintain a reasonable balance between academic and non-academic recipients, and various fields of endeavor.
6. The Committee will make an effort to ensure recognition of the achievements of women, BIPOC, LGBTQ individuals, and to ensure recipients are selected consonant with the EDI goals of the institution.
7. An [honorary degree] cannot be awarded to an active member of the University faculty, administration, staff, or to an appointed or elected official of Utah state government. Persons in these categories are eligible for nomination three years after retirement or resignation from their positions at the University or in state government.
8. A member of the Board of Trustees can be awarded an honorary degree from the University of Utah only after the individual is no longer a member of the Board of Trustees.
9. Alternate recommendations to awarding honorary degrees offered by a few committee members.

Some members of the Academic Senate *ad hoc* Committee on Honorary Degrees recommended considering alternatives to awarding honorary degrees. (Other members of the committee disagree with the suggestions, rationale, and characterizations.)

The rational for this recommendation is as follows:

*Recognizing …*

*that the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) policy R492 addresses the role and scope of Honorary Degrees for member institutions and…*

*that the individual institutions’ respective boards of trustees are responsible for “selecting those persons to be recipients of honorary degrees to be granted by the institution” (R492.3.1) and …*

*that the awarding of honorary degrees has, in recent years at the University of Utah (UU), been at times publicly controversial and internally divisive (as well as damaging) and …*

*that there is a very strong correlation between honorary degree awards and donations received by the University, which gives the perception that honorary degrees are available for a price …*

*a few committee members suggest the following:*

*Preferred option recommended by this subset of committee members for an alternative to honorary degrees:*

*The UU should stop awarding honorary degrees. Reasons for this recommendation include, but are not limited to, the following:*

1. *Commencement and convocations should be celebrations of the students who graduate, alongside the faculty and staff who supported their educational processes.*
2. *Academic degrees in general—and, perhaps, doctoral degrees in particular—are earned recognition at the culmination of sustained intellectual effort (recognized as such by academic peers). Conferring of honorary degrees may be confused with awarding of academic degrees.*
3. *USHE policy R492 conflates purposes of honorary degrees that are often, in fact, in tension: intellectual contribution, honor to the recipient and the institution, and recognition and cultivation of donations. Without specificity, it leaves an audience to make assumptions about which of the three conditions was met.*
4. *Other top-tier institutions are backing away from or outright eschewing the practice of awarding honorary degrees.*
5. *The committee members recommending these alternatives to honorary degrees held the perspective that historically, the awarding of honorary degrees has differentially recognized affluent white people—and, predominantly, men—which is a trend likely to continue based on the reification of privilege embedded in the criteria (see 3 and 4 above).*
6. *The University may use other distinct mechanisms to recognize individual contributions to the institution, i.e., exemplar donors, outstanding service contributors, etc. (See option two below.)*

*Second option for an alternative to honorary degrees recommended by a subset of the Academic Senate ad hoc Committee on Honorary Degrees:*

*Option Two*

*An alternative to the preferred option by this subset of the committee—to stop awarding honorary degrees—is a second option to create a new award that is sufficiently specific and transparent in verbiage, thus clearly indicating what the award is actually for. We suggest the “Trustees’ Honor/Prize/Award for Service in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_” (e.g., Medicine, Advocacy, Philanthropy, etc.). This clarity avoids the generalization of achievement to all dimensions of the recipients’ lives.*

1. *This award should be presented at an event outside of commencement and convocations (see 1 above).*
2. *This award should be determined at the sole discretion of the Board of Trustees, with no requirement for faculty involvement in the solicitation, nomination, or discussion of recipients. This should be clearly specified at the time of the award.*

*If the faculty voice suggests a desire to consistently present an externally facing award for service, we should create the “Faculty Honor/Prize/Award for Service in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_” (e.g., Medicine, Advocacy, Philanthropy, etc.).*

1. *This award should be presented at an event outside of commencement and convocations (again, see 1 under Preferred Option).*
2. *The process for determining the recipient of this award should be transparent and bounded by the anti-discrimination policies under which the faculty operate in their duties to the UU.*

*Third option for an alternative to honorary degrees recommended by a subset of the Academic Senate ad hoc Committee on Honorary Degrees:*

*Option Three*

*If the preferred and second options are not adopted, we suggest that faculty be explicitly recused from involvement in the solicitation, nomination, discussion processes so that the accountability for the selection of recipients lies solely with those empowered to make that selection.  Such a separation clarifies that this is not a shared governance decision (per R492.3.1).*

Notably, recommended alternatives were not a consensus position of the Academic Senate *ad hoc* Committee on Honorary Degrees, with some members of the committee feeling that the practice of conferring honorary degrees should continue for the benefits of the University and the recipients. Some members of the Committee expressed concern that faculty should have a greater role in the selection process since the decisions reflect on them as members of the University, regardless of how they are involved. There appeared to be a consensus among committee members, however, that continued emphasis needs to be maintained for ensuring that the nomination and awarding processes are inclusive and recognition is given to a diversity of individuals and accomplishments with no bias or presumption for or against any individual or group of individuals.

Task Force Members:

Stephen Alder (Chair), DFPM & School of Business

Gloria Aquino, ASUU 2021-2022 Senate Chair

Michele Ballantyne, Office of General Counsel – counsel to committee

Dhiraj Chand, University Advancement

Elaine Cohen, College of Engineering, Computer Science

Julio Facelli, Biomedical Informatics

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Rod Handy, Medicine, Division of Physician Assistant Studies

Harriet Hopf, School of Medicine

Kim Martinez, College of Fine Arts

Michelle Mattsson, former Alumni Association President, Adjunct Professor

Karen Paisley, College of Health

Patti Ross, Chief Business Strategy Officer

Randy Shumway, University Trustee

William Smith, Education

Kathryn Stockton, English, Dean, School for Cultural & Social Transformation

Karen West, *ex officio*, non-voting administrative staff

Appendix

Table I: Honorary Degree Processes and Policies of Select Institutions of Higher Education

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Process** | **Institutions / Links to Policies** |
| Institution has never awarded honorary degrees | UVA (Award Jefferson Foundation Medal instead; no degree associated)  [MIT](https://news.mit.edu/2001/commdegrees) (inspired by UVA) |
| Institution no longer awards honorary degrees | [Cornell](https://cornellsun.com/2008/10/20/c-u-rejects-proposal-for-honorary-degrees/)  [Rice](https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2008/05/16/honorary-degrees-free-speech-and-respect)  [Stanford](https://web.stanford.edu/dept/registrar/bulletin1112/4913.htm)  [Caltech](https://www.alumni.caltech.edu/hma#FAQs) (Award Honorary Member of CalTech Alumni Association instead; no degree associated) |
| Institutional moratorium | The University of California (all campuses) has had a moratorium on conferring honorary degrees since 1972; the policy for honorary degrees remains current; the moratorium was formally continued in 1986 and 2005. Some campuses now award medals (no degree associated) |
| Institutions that award honorary degrees through a process similar to U Utah | **AAU**  [Brandeis](https://www.brandeis.edu/trustees/hdr/procedures.html)  [Case Western](https://case.edu/facultysenate/about/committees-and-panels/honorary-degree-committee)  [Columbia](https://secretary.columbia.edu/honors-and-prizes/process)  [Dartmouth](https://president.dartmouth.edu/about/honorary-degrees/honorary-degree-nominating-form)  [Emory](https://provost.emory.edu/faculty/policies-guidelines/handbook/governance.html)  [Indiana](https://policies.iu.edu/policies/aca-62-honorary-degrees/index.html)  [Northwestern](https://www.northwestern.edu/provost/committees/administrative/honorary-degrees/selection-process.html)  [Princeton](https://president.princeton.edu/vice-president-and-secretary/honorary-degrees)  [Purdue](https://www.purdue.edu/bot/degrees/honorary-degree-process.php)  [Texas A&M](https://policies.tamus.edu/11-07.pdf)  [University of Arizona](https://facultyaffairs.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/honorary-degree-policy-2012.pdf)  [University of Buffalo](https://www.suny.edu/sunypp/documents.cfm?doc_id=150)  [Kansas](https://www.kansasregents.org/about/policies-by-laws-missions/board_policy_manual_2/chapter_iii_coordination_of_institutions_2/chapter_iii_full_text#degrees)  [Maryland](https://www.umaryland.edu/policies-and-procedures/library/academic-affairs/policies/iii-300a.php)  [Michigan](https://president.umich.edu/honors-awards/honorary-degree-committee/honorary-degree-committee-nomination-submission/)  [UNC – Chapel Hill](https://legal.uncc.edu/policies/up-209)  [Oregon](https://policies.uoregon.edu/vol-2-academics-instruction-research/ch-8-academics-other/honorary-degrees-granting#:~:text=The%20University%20of%20Oregon%20(University,B.) (less information required)  [Penn](https://secretary.upenn.edu/ceremonies/honorary-degrees) (less information required)  [Washington](https://www.washington.edu/ceremony/honorary-degrees/procedures/) (less information required)  [USC](https://honorarydegrees.usc.edu/nomination-process/) (only USC faculty, staff, students, alumni, or Trustees may nominate; nominations from outside sources disqualify the nominee)  **Pac-12 (non-AAU**)  [Washington State](https://president.wsu.edu/honorary-doctoral-degrees/) |
| Final approval by President, Board of Trustees, or equivalent | [Missouri](https://www.umsystem.edu/ums/rules/collected_rules/programs/ch220/220.030_honorary_degrees)  [Rutgers](https://universitysecretary.rutgers.edu/honorary-degree-nomination/guidelines-honorary-degrees)  [University of Toronto](https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/governance-bodies/committee-honorary-degrees/guidelines-committee-honorary-degrees) |
| Multiple letters of recommendation required | [CU – Boulder](https://connections.cu.edu/stories/call-nominations-honorary-degrees-medals-distinguished-service-awards)  [Minnesota](http://uawards.umn.edu/university-awards/honorary-degree)  [Iowa](https://honorary-degrees.sites.uiowa.edu/honorary-degree-policy) |
| Final approval by Academic Senate | [McGill](https://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/hdcc_guidelines_sept._22_2020.pdf)  Ohio State  Tulane  Florida  Wisconsin |
| No policy listed (honorary degrees awarded, process unclear) | **AAU**  [ASU](https://graduation.asu.edu/honorary)  Boston University  [Brown](https://www.brown.edu/Administration/News_Bureau/Databases/Encyclopedia/search.php?serial=H0200)  [Duke](https://trustees.duke.edu/honorary-degrees/nominations)  Georgia Tech  Harvard  [Johns Hopkins](https://trustees.jhu.edu/honorary-degree-process/)  [Michigan State](https://trustees.msu.edu/bylaws-ordinances-policies/bylaws/article-9.html)  PennState  U Chicago, Pittsburgh  Rochester  [Stony Brook](https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/pres/from_president/message_020520)  [Illinois](https://www.senate.illinois.edu/hd_criteria.asp)  [UT-Austin, Vanderbilt](https://www.utsystem.edu/board-of-regents/rules/20301-honorary-titles-and-degrees)  [Wash U](https://www.washington.edu/ceremony/honorary-degrees/procedures/)  [Carnegie Mellon](https://www.cmu.edu/honorary-degrees/#:~:text=Each%20year%2C%20students%2C%20staff%2C,the%202020%2D21%20academic%20year.)  **USHE**  [SLCC](https://www.slcc.edu/commencement/honorees/honorary-doctorate.aspx)  Snow College  [SUU](https://www.suu.edu/accreditation/pdf/suu-standard-2-prfr.pdf) |