Honorary Degree Review Process

Nominations for honorary degrees undergo multiple levels of review on the campuses and at the System level. Listed below are the chief steps in this process:

- Campus president appoints honorary degree committee;
- Committee proposes candidates, collects background information;
- President reviews nominations and makes final selection of campus candidates;
- President sends campus nomination materials to Secretary of the University at State University of New York System Administration;
- Secretary's Office compiles and reviews campus nominations for:
    - nominees proposed by two or more campuses (must be adjudicated);
    - nominees who have already received an honorary degree from another State University campus (cannot receive a second honorary degree from SUNY);
    - completeness and appropriateness of nomination materials;
    - potential University concerns relating to the nominees.
- Provost convenes early fall meeting of the University-wide Committee on Honorary Degrees, composed of senior faculty, trustees, and administrators, to:
    - review all nominations, make suggestions on appropriateness of degrees, request further information as needed;
    - identify those to go forward and those which cannot be approved;
- Chancellor and Board of Trustees informally and confidentially review results of Honorary Degree Committee's deliberations and either confirms the Committee's decisions or raise concerns regarding nominees;
- Secretary notifies presidents of approval status for their nominees;
- Campus president sends letters of invitation to nominees;
- Nominees who accept are officially and publicly approved by the Trustees in the form of Resolutions presented for vote at regular Board meetings;
- Campus may publicize nominees only following official Board approval;
- Campus awards honorary degree(s) at appropriate ceremony (usually Commencement).

Preparing Campus Nominations

The campus Presidents should solicit suggested nominations from as wide a group as possible. The nomination process, however, should be kept strictly confidential. All those who participate in making and reviewing nominations must understand that they are not to contact the nominees or in any way communicate to them that they are being considered for an honorary degree. This kind of premature communication can lead to embarrassment to the University or to the nominee if either party chooses to end the process before the nomination is completed. The campus committee charged with preparing nomination submissions must conduct a rigorous review of the qualifications of the candidate(s), including confidential consultation with appropriate faculty able to evaluate the accomplishments of the nominee(s). When the committee has completed its nomination process, the President makes a further review and submits supporting materials to the Office of the Provost for each nominee he or she is recommending.

Required Documentation

For each nominee, the President should electronically submit via email to Trustees@suny.edu the following materials to the Secretary of the University. All of these materials are necessary in order for the Honorary Degree Committee to evaluate the candidates. Omission of any part of the nomination materials could result in the nominee's rejection by the Committee. Please submit the material in the order listed (1-4).

1. The nomination form included with the guidelines should be completed and attached as the top sheet of the nominee's supporting materials.
2. A one-page summary about the nominee should follow the nomination form. This summary, printed on campus letterhead and signed by the President, should begin by identifying the nominee by name, title, present position, and/or profession. The remainder of the page should summarize the nominee's most important achievements

and the relevance of these achievements to the nominating campus. (This page summarizes the justification described in number 3.)

3. A three- to five-page justification is the third part of the nomination materials. The justification explains, in specific detail:
    a. why the nominee's achievements justify the awarding of an honorary degree;
    b. why the particular type of degree is being recommended; and
    c. how the nominee's achievements are relevant to the nominating campus.
4. Additional supporting documentation should follow the justification. These materials will vary for different nominees, but appropriate materials include a detailed vita, Who's Who entries, reviews or articles about the nominee's work, a list of major publications, a list of major awards, and the like. Supporting documentation should be kept to a maximum of 10 pages. A confidential statement of support for the nomination should also be included from a faculty member in the relevant discipline, when the nominee is an academic.
5. Presidents should keep a copy of the nomination materials on campus, as well as any additional documentation about the nominee which was not sent to the Secretary.

University-wide Committee on Honorary Degrees

The Committee on Honorary Degrees, chaired by the Provost, will review the nominees to ensure that they meet the qualifications established by the Board of Trustees. The Provost will forward a list to the Chancellor and the Board for final selection. The Committee on Honorary Degrees consists of fifteen members: ten eminent faculty members in the University System appointed by the Chancellor for three-year staggered terms, two senior administrators, two members of the Board of Trustees, and the Provost.

Campuses which have a member on the University-wide Honorary Degree Committee are expected to cover the expenses of that member for meetings of the Committee (usually one meeting per year).

Authorization to Invite

Campuses whose nominations may go forward will be informed by a letter from the Secretary of the University listing the nominees approved for invitation. Presidents may then proceed to invite honorary degree candidates directly, on behalf of the Chancellor, the Board of Trustees, and themselves. Copies of these invitations must be provided to the Chancellor's Office. Campuses whose nominations were not approved will be notified by the Secretary at the same time.

Sample letters of invitation are attached. *Remember that official Board approval will be granted only after the nominee has accepted, the campus has notified the Secretary, and the Board has acted in the form of a resolution.*

Distribution of Degrees Among Campus Types

All SUNY campuses, the University Faculty Senate, the Faculty Council of Community Colleges, and the System Administration are eligible to submit honorary degree nominations.

Limitation on Number of Degrees SUNY-wide and by Campus

In any given year, the maximum number of honorary degrees which may be awarded Statewide will be 75. Each campus may submit up to five nominations. The Provost, in working with the campus Presidents and in making the recommendations to the Board of Trustees, will ensure that the maximum Statewide number is not exceeded.

Previous Degree Recipients

No one already holding an honorary degree from the State University shall be eligible to receive a second honorary degree. Please see the enclosed list of honorary degrees awarded or pending award. We have attempted to make this list as accurate as possible; however, we also ask each President's Office to check the list for any omission of degrees awarded at your campus in the past.

Site of Conferral of Degree

Honorary degrees may be conferred during the commencement exercises of the campus which initiated the

nomination or, after approval, at other appropriate ceremonies.

Commencement Speakers as Nominees

Presidents who wish to nominate a possible commencement speaker for an honorary degree should follow the same nomination procedure outlined above. The same confidentiality rules apply to commencement speakers nominated for honorary degrees as for all other nominees. That is, speakers should not be told in advance that they are being nominated for honorary degrees, since Committee approval will not be automatic and these nominees will have to meet the same criteria for selection.

Campus Arrangements for Recipients

- Diploma cases and citations in the standard format will be furnished by System Administration. Once the campus has received notification of a nominee's acceptance, the campus shall draft a citation and forward it to the System Administration Office of Governmental and University Relations. That Office will work with the campus to arrive at the final text of the citation and will then provide the appropriate documents to the campus.
- Campuses must order and cover costs for all of their recipients' academic regalia.
- Campuses are expected to cover the entire travel and entertainment expenses of their honorary degree recipients.
- Individual campuses should not publicize their honorary degree recipients until after the Board of Trustees has publicly approved the names, and the Office of Governmental and University Relations at the System Administration has released its announcement of recipients to the press. The Office of Governmental and University Relations will coordinate its press releases with the individual campuses so that they may prepare their publicity concurrently.