



MEMORANDUM

June 14, 2018

TO: Members of the Board of Trustees

FROM: Kristina M. Johnson, Chancellor

SUBJECT: Amendments to the Policy Regarding the Awarding of Honorary Degrees

Action Requested

The proposed resolution approves amendments to the policy for the awarding of honorary degrees to streamline the approval process and expand the sources from which nominations can be received.

Resolution

I recommend that the Board of Trustees adopt the following resolution:

Whereas the Board of Trustees periodically awards honorary degrees as the highest form of recognition to individuals of exceptional distinction; and

Whereas State University of New York Policy No. 1200, entitled "Awarding of Honorary Degrees" (the "Policy"), sets forth the framework for the awarding of honorary degrees by the Board of Trustees; and

Whereas streamlining the current two-phase approval process allows more time for campus and System Administration promotion of, and publicity around, pending awards; and

Whereas adding the Board of Trustees as a nominating entity, a body comprised of individuals who are recognized leaders in their respective fields, is consistent with the stated purpose of the honorary degree program to identify candidates that elevate the State University of New York; now, therefore, be it

Resolved that Policy 1200 is hereby amended in the form attached to this Resolution; and, be it further

Resolved that the Chancellor, or designee, shall update all related procedures and guidance to align with the amended policy.

Background

The honorary doctorate degree is the highest form of recognition offered by the State University of New York to persons of exceptional distinction. The proposed modifications to Policy 1200, outlined in the attached document, expand the sources from which honorary degree candidates can be culled and increase the timeframe that campuses and System Administration have to promote and publicize pending awards.

Specifically, the proposed modifications add the Board of Trustees as an entity authorized to nominate, through the Chancellor, honorary degree candidates for consideration by the University-wide Honorary Degree Committee. The proposed changes also streamline the honorary degree approval process so that the Board of Trustees:

1. conducts an initial review of candidates approved by the University-wide Honorary Degree Committee;
2. approves affirmed candidates by resolution;
3. grants authority to invite affirmed candidates to receive the award;
4. delegates final review of candidates who have accepted the invitations to the Chancellor; and
5. grants authority to the Chancellor to authorize conferral of the degree.

These modifications are designed to assist SUNY in fulfilling the purposes of the honorary degree program, including to “elevate the State University of New York in the eyes of the world by honoring individuals who are widely known and highly regarded for achievements in their respective fields of endeavor.”

Attachment



Category:

Academic Affairs

Responsible Office:

[Academic Affairs](#)

Policy Title: Honorary Degrees, Awarding of

Document Number: 1200

Effective Date:

~~November 05, 2015~~ [June 14, 2018](#)

This policy item applies to:

Community Colleges

State-Operated Campuses

Summary

~~Guidelines have been adopted that~~ [This policy](#) establish~~s~~es the purpos~~e~~es of honorary degrees and the selection process for degree recipients.

Policy

~~Guidelines for the Awarding of Honorary Degrees~~

The honorary doctorate degree is the highest form of recognition offered by the State University to persons of exceptional distinction.

A. The Purposes of Honorary Degrees Awarded by the State University of New York

1. To recognize excellence in the fields of the degrees authorized at State University campuses as well as business, philanthropy, public affairs, and public service -which exemplify the mission and purposes of the State University of New York.
2. To honor meritorious and outstanding service to ~~the a campus, the State University of New York~~ [University](#), the State of New York, the United States, or to humanity at large.
3. To recognize ~~men and women~~ [those](#) whose lives and significant achievements serve as examples of the University's aspirations for its diverse student body.
4. To elevate the ~~University~~ [State University of New York](#) in the eyes of the world by honoring individuals who are widely known and highly regarded for achievements in their respective fields of endeavor.

B. The Nature of the Honorary Degree

1. The Board of Trustees shall award all honorary degrees in the name of the State University of New York. As authorized by law¹ and in accordance with the Rules of

¹ Education Law, 355(2) (f) [Laws of 1979, Chapter 213].

the Board of Regents,² the State University Board of Trustees has selected to offer the following registered honorary degrees:

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

2. The specific honorary degree awarded shall be appropriate to the nature of the ~~attainment~~ achievements which ~~is-are~~ being recognized.

C. Criteria for Selection of Degree Recipients

1. The basis for the selection of a degree recipient shall be consistent with the *Purposes of Honorary Degrees* stated above.
2. The nominee must be distinguished, and the person's achievements must be both relevant and appropriate to the nominating campus. Eligibility for nomination is restricted to persons of state, national, or international stature.
3. The nominee should have a connection with the campus or the State University as a whole. He/she may be ~~an alumna/usa~~ graduate of the State University of New York. The nominee ~~could-may~~ have participated in campus programs, partnered in scholarly or creative activity with its faculty or students, or assisted the campus with programmatic development. Furthermore, the connection ~~could-may be established through~~ be national or international prominence in a particular discipline in which the campus has a program. Alternatively, the candidate may have achieved recognized national or international prominence in ~~their~~ his/her field.
4. Substantive service to the University or the particular campus is not sufficient justification for an honorary degree if the individual does not meet the other criteria for honorary degrees. ~~Instead~~ Under those circumstances, a campus award is recommended.

D. Time, Place and Method of Awarding Degrees

1. Honorary degrees shall be conferred at University ceremonies authorized by the Board of Trustees, including commencement exercises. The presentation of honorary degrees may also be permitted outside the normal procedures in unusual circumstances, such as to recognize visiting dignitaries and, in other special cases, as recommended to the Board by the Chancellor.
2. Honorary degrees may be awarded in absentia, but only upon recommendation to the Board by the Chancellor in the case of extraordinary and compelling circumstances. In the event of unexpected inability to appear at the scheduled time, the conferral may be postponed to the next appropriate ceremony, provided that the degree is conferred within one year after being authorized. A degree may be awarded posthumously if a recipient dies after notification of selection but before the ceremony.

² Title 8, Official Compilation of Codes, Rules and Regulations of the State of New York, 3.48, 3.50.

3. Honorary degrees shall be bestowed by the Chancellor, by the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, or by a Trustee designated by the Chairman or, in their absence, on behalf of the Board of Trustees by the President if the ceremony is conducted on a campus. If no Trustee is available, and the campus President desires a SUNY Central Administration representative, the President should contact the Chancellor.
4. Campuses must use the existing University-wide format for the Honorary Degree diploma.

E. Number of Degrees to be Awarded

The Board of Trustees shall determine the number of honorary degrees to be awarded in any academic year, with a maximum of 75. Subject to this authority, the Chancellor may issue additional guidelines on numbers of degrees to be awarded.

F. Number of Nominations ~~per Campus~~

~~Campuses Nominations~~ should be limited ~~the number of nominations~~ to those who would be certain to enhance the prestige of the University. In no case shall a campus, or entity identified in section H1 below, submit more than five nominations, nor be granted authority to award more than four in any academic year.

G. Limitations on Eligibility

1. Except under unique and unusual circumstances, honorary degrees shall not be awarded to:
 - a. Members of the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York, the Councils at the State-operated campuses, the Board of Trustees of the State University College of Environmental Science and Forestry, and the Board of Trustees of the Community Colleges during their terms of service to the University.
 - b. Members of the teaching or administrative staff, or any other employee in the University system while employed by the University.
 - c. Current holders of New York elective public office or active candidates for elective public office.
2. Since honorary degrees are conferred by the Board of Trustees for the State University and not individual campuses, no one already holding an honorary degree from the State University shall be eligible to receive a second honorary degree.

H. Procedures for Selection of Degree Recipients

1. All SUNY campuses, the University Faculty Senate, the Faculty Council of Community Colleges, the Chancellor and the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (Board of Trustees) ~~the System Administration~~ are eligible to submit honorary degree nominations in response to an annual call for nominations issued by the Provost on behalf of the Chancellor.
2. Coordination of the selection and nomination process for submissions by campuses ~~honorary degree recipients~~ is the responsibility of the campus President who shall empanel an advisory committee and review thoroughly that committee's recommendations. Throughout the procedure, the utmost care should be taken to ensure confidentiality. To verify the qualifications of nominees, campus nominating

committees should consult confidentially with appropriate academic departments for review of proposed candidates.

Campus n~~N~~ominations for degree recipients shall be encouraged from any member of the University community, including students, faculty, administrative staff, SUNY alumni and alumnae, alumni, members of Councils, Trustees, and friends of the University.

Nominations originating on a campus should be submitted to the President of the institution. The nomination submission must ~~{also}~~ include a clear and convincing statement regarding the relevance and/or appropriateness of the nominee to the nominating campus, directly addressing each of the purposes and criteria for the honorary degree. Additional suggested elements of the nominating portfolio include a detailed curriculum vitae, reviews or articles about the nominee's work, list of major awards, and any other resource material that supports the selection criteria in C3 -above.

Campus Presidents shall empanel either a local, advisory, honorary degree n advisory committee ~~or a selection committee~~ which includes representatives from faculty and staff, and which may also include representatives from other constituencies such as College Councils and the community, including Alumni and Foundation Board members. Small enough to ensure confidentiality, the committee shall have the responsibility of recommending nominees to the President. The President shall review the campus committee's recommendations, ensure that a rigorous review of the qualifications of nominees has been conducted, and be responsible for recommending nominees to the Chancellor. The President shall make the final selection and forward the name(s) to the Chancellor for consideration.

3. Nominations from the University Faculty Senate, the Faculty Council of Community Colleges and Board of Trustees~~other sources within the University community~~ should be made directly to the Chancellor by each entity's respective President or Chair with the same supporting documentation as above.

~~3.~~

4. The Chancellor shall submit all nominations, including those originating from her/him, to the University-wide Committee on Honorary Degrees ~~at~~ by the deadline established by the Provost as Chair of the Committee~~time determined by the Chancellor~~. If multiple campuses submit the same nominee, the Chancellor may designate the campus for which the award will be considered.
5. 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 Committee shall consist of 15 persons: 10 eminent faculty members in the University appointed by the Chancellor for three-year staggered terms, two senior administrators, two members of the Board of Trustees and the Provost. The Committee shall follow the procedures parameters set forth in this Policy ~~these Guidelines~~ in its deliberations, and shall submit the list of qualified nominees to the Chancellor. In those rare cases where the request to award the degree is submitted outside the established timetable for such submissions, the Honorary Degree Committee Chair will not reconvene the University-wide Committee for review, but will, instead, poll the members electronically. discuss the nomination with three or four Committee members and then inform the entire Committee of the recommendation.

6. The Provost will forward the a-list of nominees approved by the Committee to the Chancellor ~~and the Board for final selection.~~
7. The Chancellor shall submit the list of qualified nominees, with appropriate recommendations, to the Board of Trustees which shall confidentially discuss the Committee's recommendations and then approve affirmed candidates via a formal resolution. Approval of affirmed candidates by the Board of Trustees authorizes the issuance of invitations to candidates to receive the honorary degree. The Chancellor will conduct a final review of all nominees who accepted campus invitations. Final approval by the Chancellor, under authority delegated by the Board of Trustees, authorizes the degree conferral. ~~make the final selection of degree recipients.~~ In certain circumstances, the Chancellor may forward nominations or make recommendations on campus and other submitted candidates directly to the Board of Trustees.
8. The ~~Chancellor Provost~~ shall notify campus Presidents regarding the Board's selection of degree recipients. Upon receipt notice of the Board's approval to proceed, Presidents shall issue invitations to nominees directly, on behalf of the ~~Chancellor University, the Board of trustees, and themselves.~~ Copies of these invitations must be provided to the Chancellor and the Provost.
9. Nominees' responses to campus Presidents must ~~then~~ be forwarded to ~~the Chancellor and~~ the Provost in a timely manner, so that the Chancellor can conduct the final review described above. The Chancellor's final approval will be communicated to the nominating entity by the Provost. ~~Board resolutions can be prepared for those who accept the University's invitation.~~
10. Announcement or promotion of nominees is prohibited until such time as campuses have been notified of this final approval by the Chancellor.

The Board requires that confidentiality be maintained throughout the procedure as a matter of professional courtesy to candidates.

I. Revocation of Degrees

The authority to revoke a previously awarded honorary degree rests with the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York. The Board of Trustees may revoke an honorary degree if, in its judgment, the recipient of the degree has engaged in conduct that: 1) is inconsistent with the mission and/or values of the State University of New York; 2) undermines the accomplishments that were cited as the basis for awarding the honorary degree; or 3) is injurious to the reputation of the State University of New York or any of its constituent campuses. The Board of Trustees' revocation of an honorary degree must be supported by the Chancellor's recommendation, made after an evaluation of the necessity for such action using the same procedures articulated in this policy for the selection and nomination of an honorary degree recipient.