

## **University of Illinois at Chicago Honorary Degree Guidelines**

**Background:** The Chancellor and the Provost charged the Office of Faculty Affairs to examine the system of awarding honorary degrees at UIC and to provide feedback on whether the system needs to be modified. An ad hoc committee<sup>1</sup>, comprised of individuals representing different offices of the University, examined the following with respect to honorary degrees: our current guidelines and policy; our goal; whether we wish to engage some or all of the people we have honored in the activities of UIC and, if so, what processes should be adopted; whether the honorees should be asked to address the UIC community; whether we need to change the guidelines with respect to the types of individuals upon whom UIC wishes to bestow honorary degrees; the timeline of the process; and the logistics of the ceremony, considering that there is no longer a single UIC commencement ceremony. At the beginning of this semester, the Committee submitted its recommendations to the Chancellor, the Provost and the Senate Agenda and Executive Committees. The guidelines have been approved by the Chancellor, the Provost, and the Senate Agenda Committee and will be discussed formally at the next Senate Executive Committee in early November.

---

<sup>1</sup> Mrinalini C. Rao, Chair  
Stanley Fish  
Sylvia E. Furner  
Clark Hulse  
Julie M. Hurd  
Abigail McWilliams  
Arlene F. Norsym  
Diane Rudall  
David M. Sokol  
Bill Burton  
Kimberly Barba  
Lon Kaufman  
Mark Rosati

Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, Office of Academic Affairs  
UIC Distinguished Professor, Department of English  
Senior Associate Dean, Public Health Administration  
Dean, Graduate College  
Science Librarian and Coordinator of Digital Library Planning  
Acting Assoc. Dean, Academic Affairs, College of Business Administration  
Vice President and Associate Chancellor, Alumni Relations–Chicago  
Senate Coordinator, UIC Faculty Senate  
Professor Emeritus, Director of Museum Studies, Art History  
News Bureau Director, Office of Public Affairs  
Administrative Assistant, Office of Academic Affairs  
Vice Provost for Undergraduate Affairs, Office of Academic Affairs  
Associate Chancellor, Office of Public Affairs

## **A. Rationale and Criteria for Awarding Honorary Degrees**

Honorary degrees are the highest award conferred by UIC. The awarding of an honorary degree forges a relationship between UIC and the recipient, publicly recognizing the accomplishments of an outstanding individual and strengthening public recognition of UIC's mission and values through the association. An honorary degree may be awarded for exemplary and extraordinary contributions either to the scholarly or professional world, to public service, or to UIC's achievements and the ideals of its missions of teaching, research, service, and economic development. The recipient's contributions to academia or society should reflect the purposes and ideals of UIC, including academic excellence, public education, and access to excellence. The recipient should be an outstanding citizen and serve as a role model for one or more of UIC's constituencies – student, faculty, and staff. Although not a prerequisite, nominees should have a strong connection to Illinois or UIC through education, residence, service, or achievements. Honorary degree recipients are encouraged to become active members of the UIC community by helping UIC in some measure to reach its goals in teaching, research, service, and development.

Honorary degrees can be awarded for outstanding service in one or more of the areas listed below. Criteria for awards made in each area are as follows:

1. Contributions to the Scholarly or Professional World
  - A. A documented record of achievement in research or creative activities that have increased understanding of the natural world, society, and the human condition.
  - B. The impact of the scholarly or professional accomplishments of the candidate on the regional, national, or international communities.
  - C. The relevance, relationship, or applicability of the candidate's scholarly or professional contributions to the Chicago metropolitan area.
2. Contributions to Public Service
  - A. A sustained record of service to the public that has positively affected society within government, other public institutions, or private agencies.
  - B. Particular emphasis is placed on service that has directly impacted the City of Chicago, the Chicago metropolitan area, or the State of Illinois.
3. Commitment to UIC
  - A. A documented, long-term record of dedicated service that has substantially assisted UIC in the achievement of its teaching, research, service, or economic development missions.
  - B. The candidate's commitment must directly relate to the academic missions of UIC.

**B. Rules**

1. Honorary degrees may not be conferred on current or recent (within the past 5 years) employees of UIC, the University of Illinois administration, or members of the Board of Trustees.
2. Honorary degrees may not be conferred on elected or appointed officials of the state government to whom the University is directly or indirectly answerable.
3. Candidates may not nominate themselves to receive an honorary degree.
4. An honorary degree must not be awarded to anyone not expressly approved by the Senate.
5. Persons being considered for an honorary degree must not be informed of their candidacy until contacted by the Chancellor (see Process and Timeline, #10).
6. Candidates receiving honorary degrees must agree to attend and participate in ceremonies or events associated with the awarding of the honorary degree prior to the final approval of that honorary degree.
7. Honorary degrees may not be awarded *in absentia*.
8. Honorary degrees will not necessarily be offered each year. No more than five candidates shall be honored in one calendar year.

### **C. Documentation of Nominations**

The nominating package submitted to the Senate office (see Section D for process) must meet the above criteria and rules, and contain the following information:

1. The nominator should submit a detailed narrative letter, indicating in non-technical terms the importance of the achievements and the reasons why these achievements should be honored by UIC.
2. Where appropriate, a curriculum vita, including bibliography, must be submitted with the nomination. In case a complete curriculum vita is not available (particularly since confidentiality requires a candidate not be informed of the nomination), as much comparable information as possible should be provided.
3. Letters of support are not required but are always appreciated and valued, especially if they provide information not available in the rest of the package.
4. At various steps in the selection process, letters may be solicited from University members. Similarly, the committees may seek counsel from appropriate academic units or colleagues concerning the qualification of the nominees.
5. All nominations and supporting documents are considered strictly confidential and not subject to disclosure. The documents are not retained once the Committee has finished its deliberations (except as outlined under Process and Timeline, #10).
6. Prior to the public announcement by the Board of Trustees, all deliberations shall be treated as confidential. Nominees will be requested to keep their nomination confidential until this public announcement.

#### D. Process and Timeline

**The following steps, 1–10, must be conducted in strict confidentiality.**

(Note: Years 01-05 refer to calendar years and the timeline and not to 2001-2005)

1. Any faculty, student, or staff member of UIC may submit candidates for consideration to receive honorary degrees. Recommendations received in the Senate Office by December 1<sup>st</sup> of Year 01 will be given consideration for conferral of an honorary degree in December or May of the Year 03. (See Documentation of Nominations below for specifics.)

An electronic nomination should be marked **CONFIDENTIAL: HONORARY DEGREES** and e-mailed to Elizabeth Dooley, [edooley@uic.edu](mailto:edooley@uic.edu) : Senate Coordinator and Clerk; UIC Office of the Senate - M/C 303; 750 S. Halsted, Rm. 513 Student Center East (SCE); Chicago, IL 60607-7016.

2. A maximum of five candidates per calendar year may receive honorary degrees.
3. A Nominating Committee charged with considering and nominating a slate of candidates for honorary degrees will receive copies of the recommendations submitted and will convene early in January of Year 02.

Composition of Proposed Nominating Committee:

Chair, Senate External Affairs Committee (Chair)

Three senior faculty selected by the Senate

(One member could be the chair of the Campus Promotion and Tenure Committee)

One representative of Provost's Management Team (Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs)

Chancellor's Designee

(Could be one or more of the following individuals:

Representative from Office of Public Affairs

Representative from Office of Advancement

Representative from the Great Cities Institute)

Student Representative

4. The Nominating Committee will meet between January and late February of Year 02 to consider the submitted candidates and may generate further candidates based on its own deliberations.
5. Although up to five candidates may be awarded honorary degrees per calendar year, the nominating committee may nominate a pool of candidates (up to 8) per calendar year. The list of nominations may be prioritized or in random order.

## Honorary Degree Guidelines

6. For each nominee the Nominating Committee prepares a brief dossier containing a letter citing the reasons for the nomination, a summary of the informational sources used to make the determination, and any relevant supporting materials. Dossiers are submitted to Senate External Affairs Committee by March 7<sup>th</sup>, Year 02.
7. The Senate External Affairs Committee reviews all dossiers and determines whether to recommend any, all, or some of the nominations to the Senate Executive Committee by March 31<sup>st</sup>, Year 02.
8. By May 1<sup>st</sup>, Year 02, the Senate identifies a pool of nominees for whom it recommends honorary degrees be conferred and submits the list to the Chancellor. Each year new nominees will be added to the pool.
9. The Chancellor reviews list of nominees and consults with the President, Trustees, and key advisors to ensure that the final nominees are acceptable. It should be noted that the pool can contain more than three nominees, although no more than three individuals will be honored in a given year.
10. The Chancellor then contacts select individuals from this group of approved nominees to determine their willingness to both accept an honorary degree from UIC and to attend the ensuing ceremony. They are asked to respond no later than June 15<sup>th</sup>, Year 02. For nominees who are approved and wish to accept their honor, but who are not able to make it to the ceremonies in Year 03, the dossiers should be held in the Senate office for an additional 4 years. If the nominees are able to attend the ceremonies in Year 04, their nominations should be processed in Year 03 for steps 11-12.
11. The Chancellor informs the Dean of the College most closely related in discipline or interest to the candidate being awarded the honorary degree. This is to ensure that the College can incorporate the awarding of the honorary degree into its commencement ceremonies of Year 03.
12. The Chancellor presents recommendations to the Board of Trustees for approval no later than September of Year 02. A public announcement is made following approval by the Board.
13. The following December or May, Year 03, the honorary degrees are conferred by the Chancellor, who is so authorized by the BOT, at an on-campus ceremony. In the absence of a campus-wide UIC commencement, this will be in the College most closely related to the discipline or area in which the awardee has made her or his exemplary contributions. It is conceivable that some recipients may be awarded a degree at the Honors College Convocation.
14. As at all commencements, members of the Board of Trustees will be invited and encouraged to attend.

## Honorary Degree Guidelines

15. The host College will be requested to arrange activities for the honoree prior to the commencement ceremony. The format is to be determined by the Colleges. For example, the activity could be in the form of a College-wide lecture followed by a reception or an interactive session with students and faculty followed by a reception. As part of the celebration, the honorary degree recipient will be hosted by the Chancellor and select invitees at a special dinner.
16. The staffing of the process will involve at least three offices. The initial receipt of the nominations and processing through the Senate committees will be carried out by the staff of the Senate Office in collaboration with the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs. Once the nominees have been submitted to the Chancellor, the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and the Office of Public Affairs will work together with the host College and the Campus Commencement Committee to make logistical arrangements for the honorees, publicize the event, and oversee communication functions.
17. The Chancellor's office has routinely paid for the costs associated with the honorary degrees.

**E. Types of Degrees Awarded:**

Example from the University of Minnesota:

Doctor of Humane Letters –for cultural contributions

Doctor of Laws –for public service

Doctor of Science –for contributions to knowledge

Penn State:

Litt.D Doctor of Letters

LHD: Doctor of Humane Letters

LLD: Doctor of Laws

Sc.D: Doctor of Science

D.P.S: Doctor of Public Service

Ped.D: Doctor of Pedagogy

Others:

Bachelor's Degrees

Master's degrees