

Date: September 13, 2007

To: Academic Council

From: Ron Kohser, Chair, Honorary Degrees Committee

Annual Report of the Honorary Degrees Committee

The committee met only one time during the 2006-07 academic year. That meeting, which occurred on November 1, 2006, was called by Provost Wray to review and approve candidates who had been nominated for honorary doctorate degrees and as possible commencement speakers. Six individuals were nominated by the Development Office and one by an academic department. The committee reviewed material on each of the seven nominees, giving full approval to several, while expressing concerns about several others. A prioritized list was established and given to Provost Wray.

Using the opportunity to dialog with Provost Wray, the committee put forth several issues:

1. Should the committee continue to focus on alumni for commencement speakers and honorary doctorates? At one point, a previous chancellor had expressed a desire to pursue nationally-known individuals with a tie to the activities and mission of the campus (Director of NSF, President's Science Advisor, Chairman of Boeing, etc.). What was the desire of the current Chancellor?
2. Is it appropriate that almost all of the nominees for an honorary degree (an academic recognition) currently come from the Development Office? Should financial support of the campus or its potential be an influence in selecting honorary degree recipients? The committee solicited nominations from academic departments several years ago and received little response. Might a top-down request produce better results?

While the honorary degree recipient at the December commencement had received prior committee approval, it is interesting to note that the recipient at the May commencement had not been presented to the committee in recent years, and was not on a current list of approved individuals.