

Date: December 11, 2007

To: Academic Council: Kurt Kosbar, Chair

From: Ron Kohser, Chair, Honorary Degrees Committee

Honorary Degrees Committee Meeting

The Honorary Degrees Committee met in the Provost's office on the afternoon of November 28, 2007 to consider new candidates and conduct business. All members were present: Tom Akers, Venkat Allada, Ron Kohser, Kent Wray, and Michael VanDeMark. Business included the following:

1. Biographical information was provided for eight individuals. Seven of the eight were put forward by the Development Office and the eighth individual was proposed by an upper-level administrator. Each individual was discussed, with the following results: Five were approved, two were flagged for a hold with possible resubmission at a later date, and one was deferred with a need for more information. In addition, comments were forwarded on individuals, such as ability to serve as commencement speaker or appropriateness during the major giving campaign.
2. The biographical information that was provided this year was extremely sparse, appearing to focus on the personal information and data used to prepare a visitor for a development call, as opposed to the employment history, career accomplishments, professional affiliations, campus involvements, etc. that had been provided in the past. Dr. Wray agreed to visit with Development and provide them with a past bio as an example of what would be preferred in the future.
3. A listing of "previously-approved" individuals was secured and briefly reviewed. Several individuals on that list had been approved as much as five years ago, and some had been selected based on the positions they then occupied. Based on changes that had occurred, it is unlikely that some would be considered for recognition at this time. It was suggested, therefore, that approved individuals be reviewed after three years on the list and either be removed or retained. That suggestion was approved as a motion.
4. The University Collected Rules and Regulations on Honorary Degrees (Section 220.030) states that the committee should "solicit suggestions from all sources for honorary degree recipients". In response, the committee felt that more nominations needed to originate from the academic departments. Provost Wray agreed to solicit such nominations several weeks prior to our deliberations next fall.
5. While the major focus of the committee is the honorary doctorate, it was noted that there is little guideline provided to the academic departments toward the selection of professional degree recipients. Policy memorandum No. I-50 simply

states that “Recipients of these degrees are usually graduates from this institution. A distinguished career on the part of the individual is the predominant criterion for selection.” Lacking further guidelines, some units select mid-career individuals, while others honor retirees. Where academies are in place, should this recognition precede academy status or follow it? Some campus-wide uniformity might be desirable. Provost Wray agreed to forward the committee’s concerns to the chancellor.

6. In closing business, the committee elected Ron Kohser to continue as chair.