

Honorary Degrees

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About This Policy

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Responsible University Office:

Office of the President

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Scope

All Indiana University campuses.

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Policy Statement

Criteria

1. The honorary doctorate is the highest academic recognition Indiana University can bestow. Candidates for these degrees should have demonstrated in their life and in their work high standards of excellence as evidenced by scholarship or creative activity; by professional development and achievement; by public service to the world, the nation, the state, or the community; in wholehearted commitment to the development of Indiana University; or through excellence in any calling or occupation which visibly contributed to the development of society and serves as a model for present and future generations. In all honorary degree candidates these scholarly, creative, professional, service or occupational achievements should be placed in a framework of high personal integrity and concern for the public good. By awarding honorary degrees to women and men of such outstanding qualities, the University seeks to present to its several constituencies veritable models worthy of emulation and respect. Students, faculty, alumni, and the people of the state as a whole should recognize in the honorary degree recipients qualities they consider particularly relevant to their own experiences, whether these be scholarship, creative activity, a profession, public service, University service, or a vocation.
2. Candidates for the honorary degree generally should have significant ties to the State of Indiana or to Indiana University through birth, residence, education, service, or notable achievement.
3. Honorary degrees are not normally awarded to candidates for political office or to elected officials currently in office or to faculty, staff, or administrators currently in service. Retired or former faculty members must meet the same high standards for nomination as all other honorary degree candidates.
4. The honorary degree may not be awarded in absentia; but, if an approved nominee cannot be present at the convocation for which the degree was offered, the recommendation for the degree shall be reviewed annually by the Honorary Degrees Committee.

5. All nominations are referred to the Honorary Degrees Committee, whose recommendations are transmitted by its chairperson to the University Faculty Council. After approval by the University Faculty Council, the nominations are transmitted to the President of the University for submission to the Board of Trustees for formal action.

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Reason For Policy

The conferral of honorary doctoral degrees provides a special opportunity for the university to recognize persons of outstanding accomplishment. Indiana University, as a leading public university in the State of Indiana, recognizes a particular responsibility to acknowledge and honor persons of outstanding achievement who have significant ties to the state or the university. As an institution particularly responsible for advanced teaching and research in the various academic and professional fields, Indiana University has an equally important responsibility to identify and honor persons of national and international eminence who are the leaders of their fields of creative or professional endeavor.

The honorary doctorate is the highest academic recognition Indiana University can bestow. Thus, candidates for the honorary degree must have demonstrated the highest levels of excellence as scholars, artists, professionals, or public servants. Equally high expectation is placed on their personal integrity and concern for the public good. In recognizing such persons, the university identifies women and men who can serve as role models for students, faculty, and alumni of Indiana University, indeed, for all persons of the state, to respect and emulate.

Candidates for an honorary doctorate can be nominated by any member of the university family. Nominations are submitted for the first stage of review to the Honorary Degrees Committee (HDC), which is a standing committee of the University Faculty Council. Some campuses have established faculty committees to initiate nominations and provide for preliminary review at the local level. Nomination materials need not be extensive but should indicate the extraordinary nature of the candidate's life and contribution and should document the backing of the campus faculty and administration. The following initial documentation is suggested:

1. A letter of nomination from the primary nominator.
2. A short (one-page maximum) narrative explaining why the candidate is worthy of an honorary doctorate from our institution.
3. A curriculum vitae.
4. Several letters of recommendation from *within* the university, usually from senior professors, distinguished scholars, and/or administrators, and a letter from the dean of the sponsoring college [or appropriate head of the academic unit on the campus making the recommendation].

Nominators may be asked by the HDC to expand the dossier and to solicit statements of support from distinguished individuals *outside* the university.

Approved candidates are recommended by the HDC to the University Faculty Council for a second stage of review and approval. The president of the university then transmits the dossiers of approved candidates to the Board of Trustees for review and final, formal action.

It should be noted that the process of committee, council, and board review is a long one, often taking one to two years from inception to the actual awarding of the degree at a public ceremony. To assist university colleagues in their efforts, nominators should start the process early.

Since nominations for honorary degrees can be initiated by persons from any segment of the university family, the achievement of individuals which prompt nominations will reflect the broad spectrum of values expressed in contemporary U.S. culture. The faculty and Board of Trustees share the important and challenging task of selecting those nominees most appropriate for recognition as exemplary models for all of us. The award ceremony focuses attention at the interface between the university and society and the qualities of the persons honored reveal the values of academia.

The Honorary Degrees Committee invites the participation of all interested persons in this important process. We await the nomination of persons of truly outstanding achievement for conferral of honorary doctoral degrees at graduation and major academic ceremonies on all campuses of the University.

(University Faculty Council, March 13, 1979; April 4, 1980; February 8, 1983; March 26, 1985; April 23, 1985; January 26, 1988; November 10, 1992)

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Procedure

1. The Honorary Degrees Committee shall be a standing committee of the University Faculty Council, with its membership composed of four members of the University Faculty Council selected by the Nomination Committee and four members from outside the Council selected by the President. The chairperson shall be one of the four Council members and shall be selected by the Nomination Committee in consultation with the President.

2. The Honorary Degrees Committee shall forward its list of nominees to the University Faculty Council approximately one month in advance of the meeting at which the nominees are to be discussed. The list shall be accompanied by the nominees' curriculum vitae and a written justification from the committee for each selection based on the established criteria. A copy of the criteria shall be included in this mailing.
3. The Honorary Degrees Committee shall identify resources within the University to assist in supplying input where appropriate to the selection of nominees for honorary degrees.
4. In the event that an approved nominee cannot be present at the convocation for which the degree was approved, the recommendation for the degree shall be reviewed annually by the Honorary Degrees Committee.
5. Nominees for honorary degrees shall not be voted upon by mail ballot except in circumstances judged to be emergencies by the Agenda Committee of the University Faculty Council.
6. Except for dedications and other special occasions, the presentation of nominations for honorary degrees by the Honorary Degrees Committee to the University Faculty Council normally shall be made no later than the March meeting of each year (one year in advance of the commencement ceremonies).
7. If a mail ballot becomes necessary, a candidate cannot be declared to have won unless the total of affirmative votes is greater than the total of both the negative and the further-study votes.