

# Oklahoma State University Policy and Procedures

## AWARDING HONORARY DEGREES

2-0220

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

December 2014

### POLICY

1.01 Institutions in the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education are authorized to confer honorary degrees granted by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. Oklahoma State University typically awards an honorary doctoral degree in recognition of a career of extraordinary accomplishment that has benefited society through intellectual, artistic, scientific, professional, or public service contributions. In many cases, a candidate may be best known for a single achievement; but an honorary degree is not given to celebrate a deed alone or upon simply meeting a set of minimum standards.

### CRITERIA

2.01 The following criteria shall guide in the selection of individuals to receive honorary degrees and in the awarding of such degrees.

A. Oklahoma State University shall confer honorary degrees only at the highest level for which it is authorized to award earned degrees, namely the Doctoral level.

B. Any such honorary degree shall be distinguishable from earned degrees. Typical examples are listed in the Appendix.

C. An honorary degree may be conferred only after receiving approval from the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

D. Oklahoma State University will follow the policies of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education in determining the number of honorary degrees to be granted.

E. Oklahoma State University shall not confer honorary degrees upon any faculty member, administrator, or other official associated with the University until such individuals have been separated from the University for two or more academic semesters.

F. Oklahoma State University will not recommend awarding an honorary degree for an emeritus faculty member of the University unless that person has been recognized for outstanding achievement or has pursued a meritorious second career.

G. Oklahoma State University shall not confer honorary degrees based upon quid pro quo arrangements, either for contributions promised or received, or for any other mutually beneficial arrangement between the University or an official of the University and a recipient.

H. To avoid involving the University in partisan politics, Oklahoma State University will not recommend awarding honorary degrees to serving members of the Oklahoma congressional delegation, elected and appointed state officials, members of the state judiciary, serving members of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, or the Oklahoma A&M Board of Regents. Such persons are eligible for consideration two years or more after they have vacated office or terminated employment.

I. Oklahoma State University shall award honorary degrees in absentia only in exceptional circumstances to be approved by the State Regents.

J. Oklahoma State University shall award honorary degrees posthumously only in exceptional circumstances to be approved by the State Regents.

## **PROCEDURES**

### **Committee Structure**

3.01 The Committee on Honorary Degrees is the central agency in the process of awarding honorary degrees. The committee is composed of fourteen members. Seven of the members will include the Vice Chair of the Graduate Council and the Chair or the Vice Chair of each of the six Graduate Faculty groups. The Vice Chair of the Graduate Council shall serve as the chair of the committee. One member of the Academic Standards and Policies Committee shall be appointed by the Chair of the Faculty Council. The President shall appoint four members of the committee, including one graduate and one undergraduate student. The President will also appoint a non-voting representative from the OSU Alumni Association and a non-voting member from the OSU Foundation.

### **Process Initiation**

3.02 Nominations shall normally originate from the faculty through a formal resolution of an academic unit, department or school of the University. The faculty may collaborate among units in endorsing a nomination. The consensus of an academic unit is essential to the success of such a nomination.

3.03 Not later than September 15 of each academic year, the President's office will invite all academic units of the University to consider nominations of candidates for honorary degrees. The notice shall specify a deadline for the submission of nominations which is not less than three weeks from the date the notice is sent.

3.04 Nominations from others may also be made directly to the Committee on Honorary Degrees. Where such nominations would indicate the use of an honorary degree title which directly or indirectly implies an identification with a specific departmental (unit) faculty, the committee shall seek advisory input from that group.

### **Review Process**

3.05 The Committee on Honorary Degrees shall meet not later than November. Each member of the committee shall be supplied in advance with the nominating materials for each candidate. Such materials typically will include a letter of nomination that makes the case for awarding an honorary degree to the candidate and the candidate's curriculum vitae. Nominations may be accompanied by letters of support from persons prominent in the candidate's field.

3.06 Representatives of a nominating unit shall be invited to attend the committee meeting at which its nominee will be evaluated. Following the general discussion of the nominees, the committee moves into executive session. After deliberation the members of the Committee cast written ballots rating the candidates as "recommended for an honorary degree" or "not recommended for an honorary degree." The committee recommends to the President which nominations are worthy of recognition, whether more than one degree should be awarded, and what degree is appropriate to each candidate being endorsed. All nominations reviewed by the Committee will be forwarded to the President, along with a recommendation on the acceptability of each nomination and rationale for the Committee's recommendation.

3.07 Individuals recommended for an Honorary Degree by the Committee, and not awarded a degree the first year, shall be eligible to receive the degree for the two subsequent years without further evaluation. After the third year the nomination must be reconsidered by the Committee for renewal for an additional three years or for deletion from the accumulated list of pending recommendations.

#### Report to the President

3.08 Normally the chair of the Committee on Honorary Degrees shall submit a written report on the committee's actions to the President by mid-December. The report shall contain preliminary drafts of the proposed degree citation(s). The President shall convey such report with his/her recommendations to the OSU/A&M Board of Regents for their action prior to the January meeting of the Board. The President shall then convey approved nomination(s) to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education for their action at their January meeting. Alterations of the timing of recommended schedule may be made to accommodate special circumstances which may arise.

#### Presidential Action

3.09 The President shall invite the candidate(s) confirmed by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education to attend commencement and receive the honorary degree.

#### Confidentiality

3.10 All preliminary considerations of candidates for honorary degrees by academic units and by the Committee on Honorary Degrees shall be conducted with a confidentiality appropriate to matters of personnel actions.

Approved: Faculty Council, November 13, 1990  
Deans Council, November 29, 1990  
OSU Board of Regents, December 7, 1990

Revised: Faculty Council, May 1, 1999

Deans Council, September 9, 1999

Revisions Approved by Council of Deans: October 2003

Revisions Transmitted to Faculty Council: October 2003

Revisions Approved by Provost: September 2006

Revisions Approved by the Honorary Degree Committee, September 9, 2009

Revisions Approved by the Council of Deans, September 10, 2009

Revisions Recommended by the Faculty Council, October 13, 2009

Revisions accepted by the Administration, November 10, 2009

Revisions recommended by the Faculty Council, November 11, 2014

Revisions reviewed and accepted by the Honorary Degree Committee, December 5, 2014

Revisions approved by the Council of Deans, December 11, 2014

Revisions accepted by the Administration, February 18, 2015

## Appendix

The following are typical examples of current national practice for titles for honorary degrees:

- a) Doctor of Fine Arts (D.F.A.) for distinction in the fine arts.
- b) Doctor of Social Science (Soc.Sc.D.) for distinction, usually in academic life, in the social sciences.
- c) Doctor of Science (Sc.D.) for distinction in any field of science or medicine.
- d) Doctor of Humane Letters (L.H.D.) for distinction in scholarly contributions to the humanities or contributions to the general welfare in any number of fields.
- e) Doctor of Letters (Litt.D.) for distinction in the field of literature.
- f) Doctor of Divinity (D.D.) for distinction in the field of theology or for extraordinary leadership, scholarly or administrative, in the area of religion.
- g) Doctor of Laws (LL.D.) for government and public service or for preeminence in any field.

This list is intended to provide examples of degree designation. It is taken from the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education policy statement on honorary degrees.