

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY



Commencement Speaker/Honorary Degree recipient selection

Category: Academic Affairs - Operational

Responsible Department: Academic Affairs

Responsible Officer: Provost

Effective Date: 05/02/2018

Policy Summary

An honorary degree (Doctor of Humane Letters *honoris causa*) is the university's highest academic award and is conferred by the Board of Trustees.

Commencement speakers are distinguished individuals the president chooses to deliver an inspirational address to graduates.

This policy sets forth the qualifications for commencement speakers and honorary degree recipients. The accompanying procedures describe the process by which the university considers and judges nominations for these honors.

This policy also provides a process for the revocation of an honorary degree.

Scope

This policy affects the following groups of the University:

- Full-Time Faculty
- Part-Time Faculty
- Vice Presidents
- Deans

Policy

On occasion, the university may invite speaker(s), or name an honorary degree recipient(s) for the commencement ceremonies of its schools and colleges. An honorary degree recipient may or may not also deliver an address. The university will evaluate nominations made in consideration of the following conditions:

- A proposed speaker's nomination must be based on his/her significant personal contributions (be they intellectual, artistic, civic, philanthropic or religious) to the academy or to society. The nominee's personal reputation must also align with the standards of the university's mission and its Catholic and Vincentian identity and values. The president of the university has the authority to approve commencement speakers.
- Honorary degrees are awarded only to those individuals whose entire career, or body of work, represents **remarkable** personal contributions (be they intellectual, artistic, civic, philanthropic, or religious) to the academic or to society. The nominee's personal reputation must also align with the **highest** standards of the university's mission and its Catholic and Vincentian identity and values. The Board of Trustees approves the granting of honorary degrees upon the recommendation of the president.
- Ideally, a proposed speaker, or honorary degree recipient's career and accomplishments will align with the academic mission of the school or college submitting the nomination.
- Sitting elected officials are not eligible.

Procedures

Under the leadership of the Dean, and in consultation with faculty, each college and school of the university may determine its own method for nominating commencement speakers or recipients of honorary degrees in light of the above criteria. Deans must forward all nominations to the Provost no later than October 1 for the following spring commencement ceremonies.

The nomination submitted by the dean on behalf of their school or college must include at least the following documentation:

- A. The name of the nominee.
- B. His/her curriculum vitae.
- C. Contact information.
- D. A statement indicating how the nominee meets the speaker or honorary degree award criteria.

After the October 1st deadline, the Provost's Office will initiate a vetting process. The Office of Public Relations and Communications will submit a public information vetting report for each candidate to the provost. As part of its vetting process, OPRC will consult the Vice President for Mission and Ministry as to the alignment of nominee(s) with the university's mission, identity, and values. The provost, in turn, will make recommendations to the president.

The nomination of an honorary degree recipient should indicate whether the nominee also will be invited to deliver an address.

Since many of the university's commencement ceremonies are held jointly there may be more than one nomination for a speaker or honorary degree recipient for a given commencement ceremony. Each ceremony will normally have no more than one speaker, or honorary degree

recipient. In case of overlapping requests for schools and colleges with joint ceremonies, the provost recommends speakers or honorary degree recipients to the president in order of preference.

After receiving the provost's recommendations, the president makes the final decisions as to the nominees for commencement speakers. In the case of honorary degree recipients, the president submits recommendations for approval by the Board of Trustees. The president always reserves the right to choose commencement speakers, or to recommend honorary degree recipients to the Board of Trustees. The Provost's office will inform nominators of the board's decisions. The provost will also share these decisions with OPRC and the University Events Office.

Once a dean receives approval, they will contact the approved nominee and issue an invitation on behalf of the university to speak at the commencement ceremony or accept an honorary degree, or accept an honorary degree **and** give an address. At this point, the nominee must confirm their acceptance of the university's invitation. Once the dean has received confirmation they will notify the President's Office, the Provost's Office, the Office of University Events, and the Office of Public Relations and Communications. The president's office will then send a letter to the confirmed speaker/degree recipient. Ongoing communication with the speaker(s)/degree recipients is coordinated between the respective Dean and the Office of University Events.

The University's Board of Trustees may, at its discretion, revoke a previously-given honorary degree if it determines based on available information that the actions or inactions of the recipient were a serious violation of law or otherwise contrary to the mission of the University.

Divisional Collaborations

Deans of the Schools/Colleges
Provost

Contact Information

Academic Affairs
(773) 325-1785

Appendices

None.

History/Revisions

Origination Date: 01/21/2008
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