



OFFICE OF COMPLIANCE SERVICES
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UNIVERSITY OPERATING PROCEDURE

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Title: Honorary Degrees, Commencement Speaker

Overview

The University annually considers nominations for Honorary Degree recipients and a Commencement Speaker. This University Operating Procedure sets forth the process and criteria applicable to the selection process.

Applicability of the Procedure

This Operating Procedure applies to all members of the University community, including, without limitation, individuals who are faculty, staff, students, and affiliates of the University.

Definitions

None

Procedures

The University President shall annually appoint an advisory committee comprised of the president of the Faculty Senate, two deans of a college or school, at least three faculty members, and one staff member. The President may choose to appoint additional members as appropriate. The President will also appoint a chair.

The President shall initiate the nominations process in fall semester of each year, which shall proceed on a timetable that will allow for the timely selection of Honorary Degree recipients and a Commencement Speaker who will appear at the Commencement ceremony taking place in May of the year following the academic year in progress. The advisory committee will be asked to review the nominations submitted and provide their recommendations to the President.

The President also may consult with the advisory committee on the selection of a Commencement Speaker. The Commencement Speaker may be eligible to receive an honorary degree. The final decision regarding selection of the Commencement Speaker is the President's.

The advisory committee will also be asked to review nominations for honorary degrees that may be awarded at ceremonies or special events other than Commencement.

Criteria

To be eligible for consideration for the award of an Honorary Degree, a nominee must be recognized as accomplished in at least one of three areas:

- Outstanding achievement or service for the benefit of the University of Vermont.
- Outstanding achievement or service for the benefit of the State of Vermont.
- Outstanding achievement or service in the nation or the world.

Of particular importance is to identify Honorary Degree candidates and a Commencement Speaker who have achieved distinction in endeavors aligned with institutional goals and strategic priorities.

Additional considerations include:

- Sustained and dedicated commitment to public life and service
- Significant contributions to the advancement of knowledge
- Significant contribution to the University's ability to achieve its mission

Honorary degrees may not be given to current faculty, staff, members of the Board of Trustees, or current holders of political office. Exceptions may be made at the discretion of the President.

Revocation of Degrees

The authority to revoke a previously awarded honorary degree shall be on the recommendation of the President, made to and approved by, the Board of Trustees. The recommendation shall be based on evidence and guided by the principle of fairness and shall only be made after the President has ascertained the relevant facts related to the case under consideration. An honorary degree may be revoked if, in the judgment of the President and the Board of Trustees, the recipient of the degree has engaged in conduct that: 1) is inconsistent with the mission of the University of Vermont; 2) undermines the accomplishments that were cited as the basis for awarding the honorary degree; 3) is injurious to the reputation of the University; or 4) is subject to official sanction, such as a fine or a reprimand, by an adjudicating body, professional association or other organization.

Contacts

Questions concerning the daily operational interpretation of this UOP should be directed to the following:	
Title(s)/Department(s):	Contact Information:
Chief of Staff to the President	jonathan.damore@uvm.edu (802) 656-7855

Forms/Flowcharts/Diagrams

- [Commencement Speaker and Honorary Degree Nominations Form](#)

Related Documents/Policies

- None

Training/Education

Training will be provided on an as-needed basis as determined by the Approval Authority or the Responsible Official.

About This Procedure

Responsible Official:	President	Approval Authority:	President
Affiliated Policy Number(s):	None	Effective Date:	July 1, 2012
Revision History:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approved June 1, 2012• Endorsed by the Board of Trustees May 19, 2012• December 16, 2019• Endorsed by the Board of Trustees January 6, 2020• Reaffirmed July 20, 2023		

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