

HONORARY DEGREE POLICY

By action of the Faculty Senate (Date)

OVERVIEW

The honorary doctorate is considered the highest recognition that Savannah State University bestows. It recognizes individuals for outstanding accomplishments in scholarship, creativity, public service, education, or contributions to the welfare of humankind. These individuals should have distinguished themselves through extraordinary achievements that have lasting impact. The recipient of the Honorary Doctoral degree should be one, in his/her life work, has demonstrated high standards of excellence as evidenced by scholarship, humanitarian or professional achievement. These accomplishments should be evidenced through service to the nation, state or community resulting in a notable impact on the development of society. These individuals should be deemed persons of impeccable character and a model for present and future generations. In all honorary degree nominees these qualities should be placed in high esteem and concern for the public good. By awarding honorary degrees to men and women of such outstanding qualities, Savannah State University seeks to present individuals who are worthy of emulation and respect.

Students, faculty, alumni, and the people of the state of Georgia as a whole should recognize in the honorary degree recipients qualities they consider relevant to their own experiences, whether these be scholarship, creative activity, professional, public service, University service or a vocation. The recipient of an honorary doctoral degree must exhibit a career of extraordinary and lasting distinction that serves as an inspiration to students and an indication of values that are esteemed by the university. It is awarded on the basis of excellence in scholarship, creativity, leadership, humanitarian service or public service. Because awarding Honorary Doctoral degrees can be controversial, Savannah State University will ensure that recipients meet the criteria outlined and are held in highest esteem by the faculty.

A university confers honorary degree or, *honoris causa*, to a recipient and exempts them from the normal requirements for that academic degree. The degree is given to honor the recipient and also benefits the university or degree-giving institution by association. An honorary doctoral degree is unrelated to the academic doctoral programs in higher education and must therefore be distinguishable in title from all degrees earned in those programs. Four types of honorary doctorates may be bestowed:

- a. Doctor of Humane Letters (L.H.D.): contributions to the humanities or to human welfare; for contributions to literature or performing arts.
- b. Doctor of Letters (Litt.D.): given to scholars in particular disciplines.
- c. Doctor of Laws (LL.D.): given to persons distinguished in general service to the public, to learning and humankind contributions to government or public service.

- d. Doctor of Science (Sc.D.): contributions to any field of science, social science, engineering, or technology.

GENERAL GUIDELINES-ELIGIBILITY

Presented below are practices/rules which establish boundaries for awarding honorary doctoral degrees:

1. An honorary doctoral degree is not given for monetary or material contributions or service to Savannah State University. However, a donor to the university is not precluded from considerations as long as his or her accomplishments and career fit the qualifications described.
2. Honorary doctoral degrees can only be awarded at a May commencement usually presented to an invited speaker.
3. The honorary doctoral degree is used to recognize significant contributions that relates to the degree conferred. The degrees are generally conferred (bestowed) on people who are still active in their careers and/or active in public service as recognition of their accomplishments and contributions.
4. The nominee must not be a government official in a position to significantly influence the welfare of Savannah State University. However, a candidate who is retired from government service may receive consideration.
5. The nominees must **not be** a current student or current employee of the university.
6. Special consideration may be given to nominees who are associated with or are graduates of Savannah State University and/or associated with the State of Georgia.
7. Nominees for Honorary Doctorates can be nominated by the faculty to the Honorary Doctor Degree Committee. Nominations for an honorary doctorate are not accepted from relatives.
8. An honorary doctoral degree cannot be awarded in absentia.
9. An honorary doctoral degree can be awarded posthumously but only in those cases where the honoree dies after accepting the president's invitation.
10. The review process for an Honorary Doctoral Degree is a lengthy one which could last up to two years from inception to actually awarding the degree in a public ceremony.

11. Information about the Honorary Doctoral Degree will be posted on Savannah State University's Web page.

PROCEDURES

1. The Honorary Doctoral Degree Committee shall be an Ad Hoc Committee of eight called by the Vice President for Academic Affairs when nominations are received. The membership will include tenured faculty members from each College. The President shall appoint four of the eight members. The Honorary Doctoral Degree Committee shall meet to discuss the nominations received and make a recommendation to the President upon approval by the Faculty Senate. Names of nominees forwarded to the President must, without exception, meet all the criteria for the honor.
2. Nominees must be distinguished with achievements that are both relevant and appropriate. Nominees who have made extraordinary contributions to the campus can be considered, but must have made significant contributions beyond the institution and local region. Service to the State of Georgia is not sufficient justification alone for an honorary degree.
3. The Honorary Doctoral Degree Committee is required to handle all aspects of the selection procedure with a level of confidentiality appropriate to personnel matters in accordance with the law.
4. The President reviews the recommendation for approval. If approved by the President, the recommendation and supporting documents will be forwarded to the Board of Regents for final approval.
5. Upon approval by the Board of Regents, the President will extend an invitation to the nominee to attend commencement to receive the honorary doctoral degree. The president makes all necessary arrangements upon acceptance of the invitation including all matters associated with the award ceremony.

NOMINATION APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

1. Nominations can originate, any time, from members of the faculty or others associated with the University. All nominations shall be received in Academic Affairs.
2. Nominations and completed applications are sent to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Vice President for Academic Affairs will forward nomination and portfolios to

the Chair of the Honorary Doctoral Degree Committee. The chair shall convene the committee to discuss procedures and establish a meeting schedule.

3. Support of a majority the committee is required to forward the nomination. Nominations receiving less than a majority vote will be removed from further consideration. The Honorary Doctoral Degree Committee forwards its recommendations to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Positive recommendations shall be accompanied by appropriate comments and include the recommendation of the degree to be conferred. The Vice President for Academic Affairs will make the appropriate comments and forward files to the President.
4. All nominations are written and submitted by the nominator and shall include:
 - a. A biographical statement containing name, address, professional title, place of birth, educational background, employment history and other honorary degrees, if any;
 - b. Appropriate written documentation from the nominator consisting of a statement of application, 3-5 typed double spaced pages, to include a list of primary contributions that qualify the individual for the honorary degree;
 - c. A minimum of three written references from persons familiar with the nominee's contributions and/or public service.

GUIDELINES for DOSSIERS

It is not possible to strictly define content requirements for dossiers because the information available is highly variable depending on the degree sought. However, the dossier prepared by the nominator should include the following elements:

1. A letter of nomination consisting of a narrative (statement of application 3-5 pages) explaining why the nominee is worthy of an honorary doctorate from Savannah State University. The following questions should be answered in the nominator's summary statement:
 - What is the specific content of the nominee's contribution?
 - What is original about that contribution?
 - Of all possible contributors to the field of endeavor, why is this nominee of exceptional merit?

- Why is the field of the nominee especially appropriate to Savannah State University?
2. a minimum of three current letters of recommendation from within the university, from senior professors 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.
- a. A resume summarizing the education, career, honors, and awards, with the items in each major section listed in chronological order.
 - b. A brief discussion of the nominee's accomplishments, the impact of those accomplishments, and the relationship of the nominee to the university, the State of Georgia and beyond.

Telephone interviews and letters of support cannot be used in the preparation of dossiers but the nominator of a particular nominee may be consulted for assistance. The dossier must specify the recommended degree title the nominator is requesting.