Honorary Degrees
Board of Regents Policy – 1.5.1

Other than the earned doctorate, the greatest recognition that the University of Nebraska can give to an individual is an Honorary Degree. Such awards are not given lightly and are awarded only when the achievement in scholarship, public service or leadership is of such merit that public distinction is warranted.

1. Purpose and Criteria

a. The University of Nebraska may award Honorary Doctoral Degrees to recognize individuals who have attained achievements of extraordinary and lasting distinction.

b. The following criteria are suggested in selecting honorary degree recipients:

1) Persons who have rendered distinguished service to the university;

2) Persons who have rendered distinguished service to the state;

3) Graduates, former students or former employees who have achieved distinction;

4) Persons who have a record of scholarship, creativity, leadership, humanitarian or public service, although not associated with the university or the state.

c. Honorary Doctoral Degrees shall not be awarded to members of the university faculty, staff or Board of Regents so long as a relationship exists with the university. Such degrees should be awarded only in exceptional cases to retired faculty members or staff for career distinction achieved at the University of Nebraska.

d. Honorary Doctoral Degrees shall not be awarded to any person seeking or holding an elective state or federal office in Nebraska.

e. The University of Nebraska shall award no more than one honorary degree to any single individual.

2. Nominating Process

a. Honorary degree recipients may be nominated from campus committees, the Board of Regents or the general public.

b. Each campus of the university shall create a committee to solicit suggestions and nominations from all sources on its respective campus. After preparing the recommendations and following the procedures established for faculty approval, the committee shall present the recommendations to the Chancellor of the campus. The Chancellor will review the recommendations and forward them to the Executive Vice President and Provost, with his or her recommendations.

c. Nominations from the Board of Regents or from the public shall be made to the Executive Vice President and Provost. Nominations shall remain on file and available for consideration for two (2) years.

d. The President of the university is encouraged to confer with the President of the University of Nebraska Foundation for possible nominations. The Chancellors are encouraged to confer with their offices of alumni affairs for possible nominations.

e. Each nomination shall be presented in written form and shall include the name of the nominator(s), a vitae or brief biography of the proposed recipient, a description of accomplishments making the nominee worthy

of an honorary degree, and any other supporting documentation deemed appropriate to assist in the deliberations.

3. Selection Process

   a. All nominations for honorary degrees shall be provided to the Executive Vice President and Provost by December 10 of each year. The nominations shall be for all commencement exercises for the following calendar year.

   b. The Chair of the Board of Regents shall select three (3) members of the Board to serve as a committee of the Board to review the nominations with the Executive Vice President and Provost and to make recommendations to the entire Board. The honorary degree committee shall evaluate each nomination against the criteria set forth above. The committee shall meet prior to January 1 of each year and make recommendations for the next calendar year.

   c. The Board of Regents shall review and approve or reject the honorary degree nominations in closed session at the first Board meeting following the committee deliberations. The authority to award honorary degrees rests with the Board of Regents.

   d. The Chancellor of each campus shall extend invitations to honorary degree recipients following formal approval by the Board of Regents.

4. Conferring the Award

   a. All honorary degrees given by any of the four campuses of the university shall be in the name of the University of Nebraska. The general diploma format adopted by the Graduate College shall be used with the "University of Nebraska" printed across the top and the names of all campuses of the university printed across the bottom.

   b. The inscription "upon recommendation of the faculty" shall appear on diplomas for degrees recommended by campus committees. The word "honorary" shall appear in the line preceding the degree title. Attestations shall include the signature or the campus Chancellor, the Chair of the Board of Regents, the President of the University and the Corporation Secretary.

   c. A list of such degrees awarded shall be maintained by the Corporation Secretary.

   d. The University of Nebraska shall grant no more than one honorary degree to an individual.

   e. Honorary degrees shall not be granted *in absentia* unless specifically recommended by the faculty and approved by the Board of Regents. Individuals being recognized must accept the degree in person within three (3) years of approval by the Board of Regents. In special circumstances, and with approval by the Board of Regents, an honorary degree may be awarded separate from a campus commencement ceremony.

   f. An honorary degree recipient may be asked to be a commencement speaker. However, the two roles are separate as to process and should not be considered reciprocal.

   g. Prior to public announcement by the President or Chancellor, all matters relating to honorary degrees shall be confidential.

Reference: BRUN, Minutes, 54, p. 192 (July 22, 1989).
BRUN, Minutes, 56, p. 149 (September 6, 1991).
BRUN, Minutes, 63, p. 101 (December 9, 2000).