

**THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
**POLICY FOR AWARDING HONORARY DEGREES**

Adopted November 19, 2015

- I. A. Honorary Degrees shall be awarded by the California State University (CSU) only at the doctoral level unless board action allows an exception.
- B. All honorary degrees shall be conferred by the Board of Trustees of the California State University, in the name of the California State University or in the names of the California State University and a campus.
- C. The board of trustees shall determine the number of honorary degrees to be awarded in any academic year. In most cases, the board will consider no more than two nominations from each campus in an academic year. Board members and the chancellor may submit nominations during the same period, with a limit of one trustee nomination for conferral at each campus during an academic year.
- D. A campus president and the chancellor will consult when a trustee submits a nomination for conferral at the president's campus. The president will advise the chancellor of any concerns. If the president and chancellor agree to support the nomination, it will be forwarded to the Trustees Subcommittee on Honorary Degrees for review and recommendation.
- E. The following honorary degree types shall be recognized for conferral by the CSU Board of Trustees:
1. Doctor of Fine Arts (D.F.A.)
  2. Doctor of Humane Letters (L.H.D.)
  3. Doctor of Laws (LL.D.)
  4. Doctor of Letters (Litt.D.)
  5. Doctor of Science (Sc.D.)

Other types may be proposed to the board for consideration. However, the board will not authorize degree designations that are conventionally conferred as earned doctorates.

**II. Criteria for the Awarding of Honorary Degrees**

Honorary degrees may be awarded to recognize achievements in all parts of the world. Honorary degrees awarded should represent an appropriate balance between local and non-local, and academic and non-academic recipients, and degrees should represent a wide diversity of fields of endeavor.

Service or benefaction to the university do not alone justify the awarding of honorary degrees. However, these criteria do not preclude nominees who are benefactors of the California State University. Personal relationships alone do not justify the awarding of honorary degrees.

Nominees for honorary degrees must demonstrate high moral character, be distinguished in their respective fields, and the eminence of persons nominated must be widely recognized. Nominees must have demonstrated intellectual and humane values that are consistent with the ideals of the California State University, the aims of higher education, and with the highest ideals of the person's chosen fields.

The following are the criteria for awarding California State University honorary degrees:

- A. To recognize inspirational character, excellence and extraordinary achievement in significant areas of human endeavor that reflect the objectives and ideals of the California State University.
- B. To honor meritorious and outstanding service to the California State University collectively or to individual campuses, the State of California, the United States, or to humanity at large.
- C. To recognize individuals whose lives, conduct, and significant achievements serve as examples of the California State University's aspirations for its diverse student body.
- D. The honoree must be present at the appropriate California State University function to accept the degree; or in case of the honoree's severe illness, a family member must be present at the appropriate function to accept the degree.
- E. A family member must agree to accept a posthumous degree at an appropriate California State University function.

### **III. Limitations on Eligibility**

Honorary degrees shall not be awarded to:

- A. Incumbent members of the Board of Trustees of the California State University;
- B. The incumbent chancellor of the California State University;
- C. Incumbent campus presidents of the California State University;
- D. A person who already has been awarded an honorary degree by the California State University;
- E. All incumbent elected officials; and

- F. Honorary degrees shall not be awarded solely on the basis of past or present employment by the California State University.

#### **IV. Procedures for Selecting Honorary Degree Recipients**

In all steps of these procedures, utmost care is to be taken to ensure confidentiality. A breach of confidentiality could seriously embarrass the California State University and those individuals under consideration for the receipt of an honorary degree. Members of campus honorary degree selection committees and the Trustees Subcommittee on Honorary Degrees shall maintain the strictest confidences regarding nominations considered and recommended. No campus representative or trustee is to contact a prospective nominee to discuss the possibility of a nomination. Only after the chancellor officially informs the campus of trustee action may campus personnel discuss the honorary degree with the honoree.

- A. Recommendations of persons to receive honorary degrees are encouraged from any member of the California State University community, including trustees, the chancellor, presidents, faculty, students, administrative staff, alumni, campus advisory board members and other friends of the California State University. Such recommendations may include the type of honorary degree believed appropriate.
- B. In each nomination cycle, the campus (through the president) may submit two nominations for conferral in the current or immediately subsequent academic year. An approved degree may be awarded in the academic year in which it was authorized for conferral and no later than in the year immediately following the originally approved conferral year. Campuses are responsible for maintaining the limit of conferring only two campus-nominated honorary degrees in one academic year. Trustee-nominated degrees are not included in the limits of two campus-nominated and conferred degrees per year.
- C. Recommendations originating in any of the campus communities shall be submitted through the campus president. The submission shall note whether the degree is to be conferred only in the name of the California State University or in the names of the California State University and the campus. Recommendations originating elsewhere within the California State University community at large shall be submitted through the chancellor.
- D. Each campus president, after consultation with the executive committee of the campus academic senate, shall establish an honorary degrees selection committee that includes faculty representation. The committee shall review recommendations and assist in the development and compilation of materials in support of nominations to be forwarded. Following appropriate consultation with this committee, the president shall select no more than two nominations to be forwarded to the chancellor in any given academic year. Honorary degrees awarded to couples (as individuals) shall count as only one degree of the two nominations allowed for each campus annually.

- E. The chancellor, in turn, shall review and forward all qualified nominations, with any appropriate comments to a separately constituted Trustees Subcommittee on Honorary Degrees of the Committee on Educational Policy, which meets in conjunction with the annual January meeting of the board.
- F. The Trustees Subcommittee on Honorary Degrees shall be chaired by a member of the Committee on Educational Policy and shall be named by the chair of that committee. The Subcommittee shall be staffed by a member of the Academic and Student Affairs Division and shall include:
  - 1. One additional trustee (other than the chair of the subcommittee), to be named by the board chair;
  - 2. The chancellor or designee;
  - 3. Two presidents, to be named by the chancellor; and
  - 4. The following representatives, to be appointed by the chancellor following consultation with the respective bodies:
    - a. Two faculty members nominated by the Academic Senate, CSU;
    - b. One alumnus nominated by the California State University Alumni Council; and
    - c. One student nominated by the California State Student Association.
- G. The Trustees Subcommittee on Honorary Degrees, meeting in closed session, shall review all nominations received, and shall forward to the Committee on Educational Policy each nomination with the subcommittee's notation of "recommended" or "not recommended," using the policies and criteria set forth in this policy as the basis for the subcommittee's determinations.
- H. The full Committee on Educational Policy, following similar procedures, shall forward to the full board for final consideration no more than two nominations per campus and those nominations originating with the board and/or the chancellor, indicating in each case the full committee's determination of "recommended" or "not recommended."
- I. The Board of Trustees, meeting in closed session, shall make the final determination in each case, and will, by virtue of its exclusive authority in this matter, agree to award the degree type it considers most appropriate.

## **V. Conferral of Degrees**

- A. Honorary degrees may be conferred during any California State University function that the board of trustees considers appropriate.

- B. If the degree is to be conferred only in the name of the California State University, the chair of the board of trustees, the chancellor, and the campus president, where appropriate, will participate in the conferral ceremony. Convention is as follows:
  - 1. When a campus is involved:
    - a. The chair of the board of trustees (or designee) will read the citation;
    - b. The chancellor, if present, or the campus president will confer the degree; and
    - c. The campus president (or designee) will hood the degree recipient.
  - 2. When a campus is not involved:
    - a. The chair of the board of trustees (or designee) will read the citation;
    - b. The chancellor (or designee) will confer the degree; and
    - c. The vice chair of the board of trustees (or designee) will hood the degree recipient.
- C. If the degree is to be conferred in the names of the California State University and the campus, the chair of the board of trustees or designee will participate in the conferral ceremony. Usually the campus president or designee will confer the degree.
- D. The Chancellor's Office shall reimburse campus hood and regalia costs for trustee-nominated honorees. Costs associated with campus-nominated honorees will be the responsibility of the campus.

## **VI. Limits of Degree Authorization**

- A. Authorization to confer an honorary degree remains in effect for two academic years after board action. If a confirmed honoree cannot agree to accept the degree at an appropriate California State University function within the year following the originally planned conferral, the authorization shall be rescinded, and the honoree may be nominated subsequently by the same campus or a different campus during a later nomination cycle.
- B. If a CSU honorary degree holder is found not to uphold the criteria and standards for which the degree was awarded, the chancellor may hold the honorary degree in abeyance, pending board action. The board of trustees shall meet in closed session and by virtue of its exclusive authority in this matter shall make the final determination regarding whether any previously conferred honorary degree shall be revoked.

## **VII. Amending Honorary Degree Policy**

- A. Proposals for amendments to this policy may be directed to the chancellor, who will forward proposals to the chair of the board of trustees. The chair shall consider and may forward the proposed amendments to the Educational Policy Committee of the board. The Educational Policy Committee shall consider proposed changes and may present to the board a recommended action.
- B. The full board of trustees shall meet in closed session and by virtue of its exclusive authority in this matter shall make the final determination on proposed changes to honorary degree policy.

### **History:**

Approved by the Board of Trustees July 1983

Amended by the Board of Trustees July 1990

Amended by the Board of Trustees January 1992

Amended by the Board of Trustees November 1993

Amended by the Board of Trustees January 24, 1996

Adopted as policy by the Board of Trustees November 2015