



Policy Title: AA3023 - Awarding the Honorary Degree

Subject Area: General

Responsible Official(s): Executive Vice President and Provost

Responsible Office(s): Office of the Provost

Policy Statement

The University of Memphis may award honorary degrees on a selective basis to distinguished individuals. These individuals will merit special recognition for extraordinary achievements that have improved the community they serve, contributed to society, as well as benefited the University of Memphis.

Definitions

Honorary Degree Selection Committee - The Honorary Degree Selection Committee (HDSC) is chaired by the provost and comprised of the Faculty Senate president, the Staff Senate president, and the Student Government Association president. This committee reviews all nominations and votes to approve each recommendation for submission to the president.

Policy

The purpose for awarding honorary degrees is threefold:

1. to honor persons whose careers reflect sustained exceptional achievement in some field of scholarship, in public service, or in an artistic, literary, governmental, financial, professional, research, leadership, cultural affairs, or other endeavor;
2. to advance the educational mission, goals, and programs of the University of Memphis by developing associations with persons who embody the same ideals, values, and aspirations; and
3. to inspire students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, and members of the local, national, and world communities to emulate such standards of excellence, integrity, and commitment to enhance the public good.

Nominations

Candidates for an honorary degree may be nominated by any member of the University community but cannot nominate themselves for the award. Nominations for the academic year are due by the published deadline.

Criteria for Selection

An honorary degree is only awarded in exceptional circumstances. No more than two awards per year should be given by the University of Memphis. No individual will be allowed to receive more than one honorary degree from the University of Memphis.

In recognition of the University of Memphis' commitment to gender equality and social, economic, national, racial, and cultural diversity, the HDSC is committed to the awarding of honorary degrees to recipients who reflect the diversity of interests, backgrounds, and concerns reflected in the University community and the society and world served by the University.

Current faculty, staff, and members of the University of Memphis Board of Trustees are not eligible for honorary degrees. Faculty, staff, and trustees who have been separated from the university at least five years are eligible. Currently elected or appointed public officials are not eligible. Current candidates or nominees for public elective or appointed offices are not eligible. Current or prospective donors of the University of Memphis are not eligible, unless they meet criteria outlined in the Purpose for Awarding Honorary Degrees of this policy.

Recognized earned doctoral degrees shall not be awarded as honorary degrees. In general, the recognized honorary degrees are Doctor of Law (LL.D.), Doctor of Letters (Litt.D.), Doctor of Science (Sc.D.), and Doctor of Humane Letters (L.H.D.) although appropriately titled degrees could be used to recognize achievement in specific professions.

Nominations must include a letter of nomination from the primary nominator, including:

- a summary of the distinguished contributions made by the nominee as defined in the Purpose for Awarding Honorary Degrees of this policy;
- the nominator's relationship with the candidate, and any perceived potential conflicts of interest; and
- an indication of the extent to which the nominee has been associated with the University of Memphis.

During the HDSC's deliberations of the nominees, additional documents may be requested, such as:

1. the nominee's vita;
2. three letters of recommendation from within or outside of the university explaining why the candidate is worthy of an honorary degree from the University of Memphis; or

3. any additional information.

The first meeting of the Honorary Degree Selection Committee in any academic year shall be held as soon as possible following the nomination deadline. Material on nominees will be distributed to all members of the committee in advance of that meeting. The HDSC shall meet as often as appropriate in order to complete its work.

All deliberations by the HDSC will be confidential. The committee should use intense scrutiny of a nominee to ensure continued integrity of the award process. A majority of the HDSC members must vote to approve each recommendation for that nominee to be selected for submission to the president. By the middle of January, the committee will then submit the list of candidates to the president for consideration.

Authority

The President of the University of Memphis has the authority to approve and award an honorary degree.

Notification

Public announcement of the award is to be handled exclusively through the Office of the President.

Time of Awards

The Honorary Degree will be conferred at Commencement or other official ceremonies.

Expiration of the Committee's Approval

If a candidate is recommended for an honorary doctorate but not awarded, their nomination remains active for three years, then expires.

Prohibition on Fees and Honoraria

Except under unusual circumstances, an honorary degree recipient shall not receive a speaker's fee or honorarium for accepting an honorary degree or delivering a commencement address or the equivalent.

Presence at Commencement or Other Official Ceremonies

No honorary degree shall be conferred unless the recipient is present.

Last Revision Update Log: 08/30/2023

UM1648 – Revised: April 21, 2008
Originally Issued: May 18, 2005
AA3023 supersedes UM1648