

**Board Statement on Honorary Degrees
Board of Trustees of Southern Oregon University**

1.0. Purpose

Upon approval by the Board of Trustees (“Board”), Southern Oregon University (“University”) may award honorary degrees, which shall be honorary doctorates under the following criteria. The Board shall have the exclusive authority to approve honorary degree recipients. The purpose of this statement is to establish the criteria and process by which the University reviews and awards honorary degrees.

2.0 Honorary Degrees

2.1. Doctor of Humane Letters. An Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree may be awarded at the University’s commencement ceremony and shall be reserved for individuals of the most distinctive caliber. This honorary degree shall be awarded on rare occasions to individuals whose exceptional contributions are unsurpassed or seldom matched in quality. This honorary degree shall be awarded to individuals and should be limited to one such degree in a single academic year.

3.0 Eligibility and Criteria

Candidates for honorary degrees are selected based on their integrity, distinguished achievements, and outstanding contributions in their lifetime to the University, community, state, world, and/or society. This will include exceptional service of lasting distinction that is so noteworthy, because of longevity and significance to those served, that it has seldom been matched by others.

An honorary degree cannot be awarded to an active employee of the University, nor to a person holding an elected or appointed office of a state, federal, or municipal government. Persons in these categories are eligible for nomination and award at least three years after retirement or resignation from their positions at the University or in government.

3.1 The awarding of an honorary degree is recognition of a person whose life and achievements serve as examples of the University’s aspirations for its students.

3.2 An honorary degree may be offered to a person who has contributed significantly to the cultural, scientific, social and/or economic development of the state, nation, or world. The contribution should be sustained over a period of years and should be lasting in nature. One must be able to document the lasting impact of the contributions. Merely holding an executive position, public office, or

professorship for many years is not sufficient. The creativity of the individual and the extraordinary character of the contributions must be evident.

3.3 The individual receiving an honorary degree should have a sustained reputation over a period of years. The reputation should extend beyond the boundaries of the University and the state and preferably should extend nationally or internationally. The reputation should not bring reputational harm to the institution.

3.4 Affiliation or relationship to Southern Oregon University should be regarded as an especially favorable factor, but is not alone a sufficient condition, nor is it a requirement for the awarding of an honorary degree.

3.5 The activities of the individual should consist of outstanding contributions in scholarly research, teaching and learning, the arts, public service, or business. The person might be a distinguished scholar in the natural, physical, or social sciences; the arts or humanities; or a distinguished person in public life, business, the professions, visual arts, or the performing arts. Evaluation will be based on the level of intellectual and professional attainment and the significance of the contributions to the enrichment and/or welfare of the state, nation, or world.

3.6 The Board will make an effort to recognize the achievements of people of diverse identities and backgrounds, in keeping with the equity, diversity, and inclusion values of the institution.

3.7 The Board will seek to maintain a balance among persons in various fields of activity in a cycle of years. The awarding of honorary degrees should maintain a reasonable balance between academic and non-academic recipients, and various fields of endeavor.

4.0 Nomination and Committee to Review Nominations

4.1 Nomination and Deadline. Any member of the university community may nominate a potential recipient by notifying the Office of the Board of Trustees and completing a nomination form. Nominations shall be received no later than September 30 in order to be considered for an award during the university's commencement ceremony in the same academic year.

4.2 Committee to Review Nominations. The University President shall appoint an Ad Hoc Honorary Degree Committee ("Committee") to review nominations. The Committee shall elect a chair from among its members.

The Committee shall include the following members:

- A. Provost of the University or their designee;

- B. President of the Associated Students of Southern Oregon University (ASSOU) or their designee from among the ASSOU Executive Branch;
- C. Chairperson of the Faculty Senate or their designee from among senate members;
- D. Chairperson of the Staff Assembly or their designee from among assembly members;
- E. Vice President for University Advancement or their designee; and
- F. Other members may be appointed to the committee by the University President.

5.0 Process

5.1 Screening of Nominations. The Committee shall screen nominations, seek thorough information about the nominees from nominators and others, and investigate, to its satisfaction, that the nominee(s) meet the criteria above.

5.2 Evaluation. It is the responsibility of the Committee to evaluate each nominee based on the criteria and to determine whether it is appropriate to send a recommendation to the University President.

5.3 Recommendation to the President. Upon the Committee's review of all nominations and supporting documentation or information, the committee shall recommend an honorary degree recipient or recipients to the President from among the pool of nominees. The recommendation shall be accompanied by the appropriate supporting documentation or information for each nominee, sufficient for the president's decision-making.

5.4 President's Approval and Background Check. Following the president's review and approval, the selected nominee(s) shall undergo and pass a criminal background check to be conducted by Southern Oregon University. The costs shall be borne by the University.

5.5 Recommendation to the Board of Trustees. Upon the nominee's successful passage of a criminal background check, the President will then recommend an honorary degree recipient or recipients to the Board of Trustees for final consideration.

5.6 Confidentiality. To prevent reputational harm to the university and to any individual being considered for an honorary degree, all persons involved in the process of recommending honorary degrees to the Board of Trustees shall work in the strictest of confidence and without disclosure to persons not belonging to the

committee. A failure to do so may result in removal from the Committee by the University President.

5.7 Pool of Nominees. The Committee will review, on at least an annual basis, the pool of approved nominees to ensure that it remains appropriate. Nominations in the pool shall sunset after three years; although such a sunset does not preclude an individual from receiving future nominations or recommendations pursuant to this board statement.

6.0 Decision

In the January meeting of the Board of Trustees, or as soon as reasonably practicable, the Board of Trustees shall decide the recipients of SOU honorary degrees to be awarded at the SOU commencement ceremony in a given academic year.

7.0 Award

An honorary degree recipient will receive a paper diploma. The honorary degree is not associated with an official transcript or academic record other than the honorary degree itself.

An individual or organization shall not receive an honorarium or payment in exchange for accepting an honorary degree. This does not preclude an honorarium or compensation for other service or functions at the university, e.g., speaking at commencement or participating in a lecture series.

8.0 Revocability

The Board retains the authority to revoke an honorary degree award at its discretion at any time.

Approved on June 16, 2023



Daniel P. Santos
Chair, Board of Trustees



Sabrina Prud'homme
University Board Secretary

Revision	Change	Date
-	Initial Version	June 16, 2023