

FACULTY SENATE COMMITTEE REPORT: HONORARY DEGREES

TO:	Jason Francis, Faculty Senate
FROM:	Edward Walker, Chair, Honorary Degree Committee
DATE:	April 23, 2024
SUBJECT:	Annual Report for 2023024

Faculty Committee Members, Honorary Degrees, FY2020:

Edward Walker (Chair), Brian Cottle, Jennifer Anderson (Liaison), Dave Noack, Drew Weidman

Accomplishments of the Committee

The Honorary Degree Committee traditionally meets only once or twice during the year. This year, we met with the larger committee in the Miller Administration Board Room on Wednesday, November 6, 2019 at 8:30 – 10:00am and a second time on January 22nd at 9-10am in the Miller Administration Building. The WSU faculty was well represented and our members actively spoke in favor and against selected nominees during both meetings. They collectively brought a good balance to the discussion of all the candidates and provided a good perspective about the type of caliber and attributes that should be included during the selection process. Strong emphasis was placed on the academic and service given by the candidates to the world community. The faculty members felt that the committee submitted an excellent list of candidates to the president and Board of Trustees for further evaluation. In addition, an excellent slate of candidates were approved for speakers at commencement, with the university president to approach them and arrange the commencement programs for the next 12-24 months.

Attendance and Service Provided to the Committee

All of our faculty members actively participated in the process and all provided significant service (at least as much as possible given the nature of the committee.) No subcommittees were formed and no special assignments were given.

Suggestions Regarding New Directions In The Future

It is important to maintain a strong faculty influence in the selection process for honorary degrees and commencement speakers. Outspoken, strong leaders should be on the committee, to preserve the balance on the larger selection committee that includes administrators, trustees, and alumni. It could be tempting for future degree recipients to be awarded degrees based more upon their potential donations to the university and less upon their achievements. Strong, outspoken faculty members will help prevent this from potentially happening at some point in the future.

This year, we had an increased number of faculty nominations for honorary degrees and speakers. This was encouraging. Strong encouragement should continue to be given in future years to faculty to identify and nominate outstanding candidates in both our local area and on the world stage.

Note: Minutes of our committee meetings are not available. They are confidential and kept privately in the president's office, due to the delicate nature of the proceedings.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve with this committee this past year. It has been most enjoyable working with both our faculty and administrative members of the committee.

Sincerely,
Edward Walker