

## **RESOLUTION TO UPDATE THE POLICY ON THE AWARDING OF HONORARY DEGREES**

**WHEREAS**, the conferral of an honorary degree is an extraordinary distinction at Virginia Tech, which as of 2018, has awarded only 10 honorary degrees in its 146-year history; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1986, the Board of Visitors passed a resolution formalizing the criteria and process for the approval of honorary degrees and established a University Honorifics Committee as a standing committee of the university and prescribed its membership; and

**WHEREAS**, the University Honorifics Committee became the Faculty Honorifics Committee in the early 1990s when the university's system of shared governance was restructured, and the charge and membership of the committee was incorporated into the University Council Constitution and By-laws at that time; and

**WHEREAS**, the university and the board wish to preserve the award of an honorary degree at Virginia Tech as a rare and extraordinary distinction;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that to ensure that the award of an honorary degree at Virginia Tech remains a rare and extraordinary distinction, the Board of Visitors of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University hereby approves the awarding of honorary degrees according to the process described as follows:

1. The honorary degree awarded on approval of the Board of Visitors is not one obtained "in course" but is a GRADUM HONORS CAUSA awarded for professional or scholarly distinction not in the standard course of professional service to the university. Unless the president approves an exception to award an alternate degree, the degree awarded shall be one of:
  - Litt.D. Letters
  - Sc.D. Science
2. The entire nomination and decision process for honorary degrees should be treated in strict confidence by all persons involved to the extent permitted by law.
3. The Faculty Honorifics Committee will review all nominations for honorary degrees.
  - a. Nominees may be alumni or other persons who have had a significant association with Virginia Tech and whose professional achievements merit substantial recognition by the university.
  - b. Any member of the university community may submit a nomination for an honorary degree to the Faculty Honorifics Committee.
  - c. The nominator should compile a dossier that includes:

- i. A summary of the distinguished contributions made by the nominee to scholarly fields, to the arts, to technology, to the professions, or to public service.
    - ii. An indication of the extent to which the nominee has been associated with Virginia Tech.
    - iii. Letters of recommendation from three to five persons detailing the nominee's contributions accompanied by an introduction describing the credentials and relationship of the reference to the nominee.
  - d. The Faculty Honorifics Committee will make a recommendation to the provost.
4. The provost will review the committee's recommendation and provide to the president the nominee's dossier and recommendation of the Faculty Honorifics Committee along with the provost's recommendation.
5. The president will review the dossier and consider the recommendations of the committee and the provost in determining whether to advance the nomination to the Board of Visitors for approval. There is no appeal process for a negative decision by the president.
6. If the president supports the nomination, the president will advance the nomination to the Board of Visitors for consideration.
7. On the approval of the Board of Visitors, the president will report the board's action to the nominator and the Faculty Honorifics Committee. The president will invite the nominee to attend the spring University Commencement Ceremony to receive the honorary degree. Only under the most unusual circumstances will the honorary degree be awarded at another venue or in absentia;

**AND, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this resolution supersedes any and all previous policies pertaining to the conferral of honorary degrees;

**AND, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this resolution does not apply to the awarding of a posthumous degree to a student who was deceased before completing course work towards a degree and/or before receiving the degree.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That the above resolution describing the criteria and process for the award of honorary degrees be approved and supersede any and all previous policies pertaining to the conferral of honorary degrees.

August 27, 2018