Purpose of Honorary Degree:

The honorary degree is the highest honor conferred by the Board of Regents and University and is reserved for only those candidates whose extraordinary accomplishments have benefitted society. The purpose of conferring the honorary degree is to pay tribute to worthy individuals and the degree is not equivalent to, nor a replacement for, an earned bachelor or doctorate degree.

Board of Regent’s policy 2:18 sets forth system policy for the awarding of the honorary doctorate degree and can be found at https://www.sdbor.edu/policy/documents/2-18.pdf. Honorary doctorate degrees may be conferred as following:

- Doctor of Humane Letters
- Doctor of Letters and Literature
- Doctor of Public Service
- Doctor of Science

This policy further establishes a process at South Dakota State University for consideration of nominations for honorary degrees.

Guidelines for Selection:

Substantial evidence must be presented that extraordinary achievement has been accomplished. Substantial evidence should include a significant degree of creativity, resourcefulness, humanitarian concern, personal dedication, intellect, and other qualities consistent with the intent of an honorary degree. Therefore, careful distinction must be made between the extraordinary effort of talented, selfless, and energetic individuals who have performed beyond the call of duty in service to humankind, in contrast to normal expectations in fulfilling service, employment, or professional requirement (including longevity).

Consideration will be given to biographical information which may include, in addition to personal data, itemization of civic and social service awards unrelated to the proposed honorary degree, political or business achievements not associated with the primary reason for the nomination.

Eligibility for Honorary Degree:

Any person who has made extraordinary contributions or service that benefits society will be eligible for this recognition. This includes individuals who have provided significant service to South Dakota and graduates of this university who has achieved outstanding national or international distinction in his/her profession.

The following restrictions apply:

1. Anyone actively serving as an employee of the BOR system, the Regents, or elected government officials serving South Dakota.
2. Past or anticipated philanthropic activities or services rendered to the university are not considerations for conferring honorary degrees.
Nomination Process:

As a matter of professional discretion, the entire process must be kept confidential from the moment of nomination through contacting the successful nominee. The nomination process is as follows:

1. The Vice President for Academic Affairs shall solicit nominations for honorary.
2. Nominations for an honorary degree can be made by any individual or group. The title selected for an honorary degree shall not duplicate any existing earned degree title held by the nominee.
3. Requirements for nomination:
   a. letter of support from the nominator;
   b. a 100-word-or-less nomination summary highlighting the nominee’s achievements;
   c. a biographical sketch of the nominee (not to exceed five pages) and other appropriate supporting evidence (not to exceed ten pages); and
   d. up to three additional letters of support may also be included.

Review and Selection Process:

1. All nominations must be submitted no later than December 1st to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs who is responsible for assigning each nomination to an appropriate department or college for faculty review. In cases where credentials of a nominee cannot be matched with an existing SDSU academic unit, the nomination letter shall be assigned to an academic dean who would assemble an ad hoc faculty committee.
2. The assigned department head or college dean is responsible for soliciting and documenting from his/her unit or ad hoc committee a faculty response to the nomination. This faculty response shall then become part of the nomination package and shall be returned to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.
3. The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs must forward all nominations receiving favorable faculty support to the Academic Affairs Subcommittee on Faculty Awards. The subcommittee shall be appointed by the Chair of the Academic Affairs Committee.
4. The subcommittee on Faculty Awards may recommend one or more nominees put forth by the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs to the Academic Affairs Committee for their approval and finally to the Executive Committee of Faculty Senate for approval. Normally, no more than two honorary degrees will be awarded per academic year. An award may be delayed and presented in a following year in order to accommodate the schedule of the person receiving the degree.
5. The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs will retain on file for two additional years all nominations not put forth by the Subcommittee on Faculty Awards. The nominations will be re-submitted for consideration by the subcommittee, along with new nominations, for up to two subsequent years. If a nomination is not approved after three years, the subcommittee will instruct the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs to remove such nominations from further consideration.
Conferring of Honorary Degrees:

1. Honorary Degrees are typically conferred at the spring commencement ceremony. Honorary Degree recipients will be invited to the President’s luncheon following commencement.

2. Nominators and/or respective colleges are encouraged to plan other recognition activities/receptions to honor the individuals.

Approved by Academic Senate: March 27, 1990
Revised and approved by Academic Senate: February 9, 1999
Revised and approved by Faculty Senate: September 28, 2010
Revised and approved by Faculty Senate: November 27, 2018