

# SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS

## Policy Manual

**SUBJECT:** Honorary Degrees

**NUMBER:** 2.6.3

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### **A. PURPOSE**

To establish processes by which universities and the Board of Regents may bestow non-academic honorary and posthumous degrees.

### **B. DEFINITIONS**

- Honorary Doctorate Degree:** The honorary doctorate is the highest honor bestowed by the Board of Regents and the universities. The purpose of the honorary doctorate is to pay tribute to worthy individuals and at the same time enhance the universities by such action. The honorary doctorate is not equivalent to or a replacement for an earned academic degree and does not appear on a transcript.
- Honorary Bachelor's or Master's Degree:** An honorary degree awarded by the Board of Regents and the universities when it is determined as more appropriate than an Honorary Doctorate Degree. The honorary Bachelor's or Master's Degree is not an equivalent or a replacement for an earned academic degree and does not appear on a transcript.
- Posthumous Degree:** An honorary degree awarded by the Board of Regents and the universities to a deceased student who was in the final phases of academic degree completion at the time of death or whose death occurred under extraordinary circumstances such as in a university sponsored activity or while on military duty. Posthumous degrees do not appear on a transcript.

### **C. POLICY**

#### **1. Honorary Doctorate Eligibility**

Substantial evidence of outstanding achievement must be presented. 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 fulfilling normal expectations in service, employment, or professional requirements (including longevity).

The recipient must be present at the convocation at which the degree is conferred.

1.1. An honorary doctorate degree may be granted to an individual who has:

1.1.1. Achieved distinction in his/her profession; and/or

- 1.1.2. Rendered outstanding contribution or service to the people of South Dakota; and/or
  - 1.1.3. Made a recognized scholarly or service contribution as a regional, national, or international figure.
- 1.2. Honorary doctorate degrees may not be awarded to the following public officers or employees during their terms of public service:
  - 1.2.1. Faculty members and administrators of a Regental university or special school;
  - 1.2.2. Regents or other officers of the State of South Dakota.
  - 1.2.3. Holders of federal office as a representative of South Dakota.

## **2. Types of Honorary Doctorate Degrees**

- 2.1. Institutional mission and complement of programs determine the types of honorary doctorate degrees that may be awarded. Honorary doctorate degrees may be selected from the following:
  - 2.1.1. Doctor of Humane Letters;
  - 2.1.2. Doctor of Laws;
  - 2.1.3. Doctor of Letters and Literature;
  - 2.1.4. Doctor of Public Service;
  - 2.1.5. Doctor of Science.

## **3. Honorary Bachelor's or Master's Degree Eligibility**

- 3.1. The honorary bachelor's or master's degree is awarded in rare circumstances.
- 3.2. An honorary bachelor's or master's degree may be awarded to an individual for outstanding achievement, contribution to a university, or contribution to the university system that is significant but does not rise to the level of the honorary doctorate degree.
- 3.3. An honorary bachelor's or master's degree may be awarded to a Regental system student who is terminally ill and in the final phases of degree completion.
- 3.4. A recipient of an honorary bachelor's degree or master's degree does not need to be present at a convocation to receive the award.
- 3.5. Honorary bachelor's degrees and honorary master's degrees may not be awarded to the following public officers or employees during their terms of public service:
  - 3.5.1. Faculty members and administrators of a Regental university or special school;
  - 3.5.2. Regents or other officers of the State of South Dakota.
  - 3.5.3. Holders of federal office as a representative of South Dakota.

## **4. Types of Honorary Bachelor's or Master's Degrees**

- 4.1. The type of honorary bachelor's and honorary master's degrees (e.g., honorary Bachelor of Science, honorary Master of Arts) a university may award is limited to the type of academic degrees that the institution is currently approved to offer.

## **5. Honorary Degree Approval Process**

- 5.1. The Board of Regents approves honorary degrees recommended by the universities.
- 5.2. Each university shall establish a process for consideration of nominations for honorary degrees.
- 5.3. Significant changes to that process will be reported to the Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer who will notify the Board.
- 5.4. Recommendations from the universities are submitted to the Board of Regents prior to the commencement at which the honorary doctorate degree is conferred or prior to the conferral of the honorary bachelor's or master's degree.
- 5.5. The Board of Regents may award honorary degrees on its own behalf.
- 5.6. Exceptions must be approved by the Board of Regents or by the Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer if circumstances arise.

## **6. Awarding of Posthumous Degrees**

- 6.1. In rare occasions, the Board will authorize the awarding of a posthumous degree in recognition of meritorious but incomplete work that represents substantial progress toward degree completion. Most commonly this will be granted in those cases where the student was enrolled in good standing and in the final phases of degree completion at the time of death. However, since these are honorary awards, exceptions to this guideline may be made. For example, when the student's death occurred under extraordinary circumstances such as while participating in a university sponsored activity or while on military duty, it may be recommended that degrees be awarded to individuals with fewer credit hours completed. Exceptions may also be made for other mitigating circumstances such as those cases where chronic illness or some other intervening factor prevented continuous enrollment.
- 6.2. The President will forward the institution's recommendation for Board consideration. The recommendation should address the deceased student's standing and provide adequate justification for the award.
- 6.3. Each institution shall establish a procedure for initiating and reviewing recommendations which will include at a minimum a review by the faculty and administrators with oversight of the deceased student's field of study.
- 6.4. Recommendations from the institution must be submitted to and acted upon by the Board of Regents prior to the commencement at which the degree will be conferred.

## **FORMS / APPENDICES:**

None

## **SOURCE:**

BOR October 1998; BOR June 2020; October 2023 (Clerical).