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MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION	Senate	DATE	January 19, 2022
FROM	Tamara Vrooman Chancellor and Chair of the Senate Committee University Honours		
RE:	Changes to the Policy and Procedures on Granting and Revoking Honorary Degrees		

Background:

The process for selecting Honorary Degree recipients has not been reviewed since 2012. A sub committee of the Senate Committee University Honours (SCUH) was formed to review the current process for honorary degree nominations and selection. The committee noted no formal current policy for selecting or revoking an honorary degree currently exists and that only guidelines for selection are available. Please see the SFU website: [Nominations for Honorary Degrees - Convocation - Simon Fraser University \(sfu.ca\)](https://www.sfu.ca/nominations-for-honorary-degrees-convocation)

On behalf of SCUH, I am pleased to present the following policy and procedures on granting and revoking an honorary degree:

Motion:

That Senate approve the policy and procedures for granting and revoking an SFU Honorary Degree.

Policy regarding the Granting of Honorary Degrees

Preamble

An honorary degree is the highest honour conferred by Simon Fraser University. The degree recognizes individuals whose extraordinary achievements or service to society sets them apart.

Honorary degrees celebrate individuals who have had a transformative and enduring impact and who represent diverse backgrounds and fields of endeavour, including:

- Leading academics in all disciplines,
- Creative and literary arts and performance,
- Public intellectuals and opinion-makers,
- Visionary leaders in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors,
- Community builders

Honorary degree recipients' achievements celebrate what the university values and serve as an inspiration to our graduands and our entire community.

Purpose

To outline requirements for granting a Simon Fraser Honorary Degree

Policy

- a) Awarding Honorary Degree

The Senate Committee on University Honours (SCUH) is responsible for adjudicating nominations for honorary degrees and recommending honorary degree recipients to Senate for confirmation.

Honorary degrees are conferred honoris causa, "for the sake of honor". Honorary degrees are awarded as one of four types: Doctor of Laws, honoris causa; Doctor of Letters, honoris causa; Doctor of Science, honoris causa, or Doctor of Fine Arts, honoris causa.

All nominations for an honorary degree are to be kept confidential and information will only be made public if a nominee confirmed for an honorary degree by the Senate accepts an invitation for an honorary degree.

Anyone, including members of the public, can nominate individuals they feel meet the below criteria for a Simon Fraser University Honorary Degree. Anonymous nominations will not be considered in order to prevent self-nominations.

Nominees must have demonstrated:

- (i) extraordinary achievement within a field of work (either academic or non-academic), nationally or internationally;
- (ii) transformative and enduring contribution or service to Simon Fraser University or society at large; or
- (iii) inspirational leadership in society (public, private, or not-for-profit sectors).

Current members of the Board of Governors, faculty, staff and students are not eligible for nomination. Honorary degrees are normally not to be awarded posthumously or granted in absentia.

To avoid perceptions of conflict of interest, those currently holding public office or serving in senior public service roles will not normally be considered.

SCUH's recommendations for honorary degrees will be presented in a closed session of Senate and will be confirmed by a simple majority vote.

b) Revoking Honorary Degrees

The Senate Committee on University Honours (SCUH) is responsible for adjudicating requests to revoke honorary degrees and making a recommendation to Senate if SCUH determines that a revocation of the degree is appropriate.

Simon Fraser University has a robust process to award honorary degrees and revocation of an honorary degree should only be considered in exceptional or extraordinary circumstances including:

- Action or conduct of the recipient undermines the credibility or integrity of the honorary degree.
- The original grounds for conferring the degree are determined to be unfounded.

Normally, an honorary degree will not be revoked posthumously.

Requests to revoke an honorary degree can be made by any person. A request must be made in writing and include specific reasons for the request. Anonymous requests will not be considered.

The quorum for consideration of revoking an honorary degree shall be 2/3's (two-thirds) of the committee membership.

A recommendation by SCUH to revoke an honorary degree will require 2/3's (two-third's) majority vote by members of SCUH present following deliberation. Upon receipt of such a recommendation from SCUH, the Senate shall consider the recommendation in an in-camera session, and require 2/3's (two-third's) majority vote of the senators present to revoke the degree.

Conflict of Interest

Members of SCUH are not eligible to nominate a candidate to receive an honorary degree nor are they eligible to request an honorary degree be revoked.

Members of the Senate must recuse themselves from any Senate proceedings for awarding or revoking an honorary degree if they submitted the nomination for an honorary degree or submitted the request to revoke an honorary degree.

Roles and Responsibilities

Following the policy and associated procedures the Senate Committee on University Honours (SCUH) is responsible for recommending to Senate those individuals to be awarded Honorary Degrees. SCUH is also responsible for making a recommendation on the revocation of degrees.

Senate holds the final authority for awarding and revoking the degrees based on the recommendation of SCUH.

Related Legal, Policy Authorities and Agreements
University Act R.S.B.C. 1996

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.B.C.

Submissions for Honorary Degrees are supplied in confidence and will not be shared outside of the SCUH.

Policy Review

Every five years

Questions of interpretation or application of this policy or its procedures shall be referred to SCUH. If interpretation of the policy is required outside the regularly scheduled meeting of SCUH the Chair and Vice Chair shall jointly make a decision.

Retention and Disposal of Records

Information and records made and received to administer this policy are evidence of the University's actions to award and revoke honorary degrees. Information and records must be retained and disposed of in accordance with the records retention schedule.

Procedures for Revoking an Honorary Degree

A written request, with supporting reasons, to consider the revocation of an honorary degree may be made by any person to the Secretary of Senate. The Secretary of Senate and members of the Senate Committee on University Honours (SCUH) may not initiate a request for consideration. If a member of Senate makes a request to revoke an honorary degree they must recuse themselves from both discussion and vote upon the matter if it comes before Senate.

The Secretary of Senate will forward any request to consider the revocation of an honorary degree to the Senate Committee on University Honours (SCUH).

Initial Consideration by SCUH

SCUH will consider any such request received, and determine if, based on the criteria set out in the policy, there are grounds to proceed with considering the request. If there are insufficient grounds, the Secretary of Senate will send a reply to the person who made the request indicating the request has been considered and is not being pursued.

If SCUH determines there are reasonable grounds to consider the request for the revocation of an honorary degree, the request will be subject to the rest of this procedure.

Notice to Recipient and Opportunity to Make Representations

The Secretary of Senate, on behalf of the SCUH, will send, by registered letter (or equivalent), a written notice advising the recipient of the basis of the allegations; the relevant information the SCUH has received; and that revocation is under consideration. Within the time prescribed in the notice, the recipient may:

- make representations respecting the matter under consideration or any allegation of fact set out in the notice,
- request the process be halted by voluntarily returning their degree parchment, and relinquishing all rights and privileges associated with their honorary degree.

If the recipient elects to voluntarily return their honorary degree, they will notify the Secretary of Senate in writing of that fact within the time prescribed in the notice. After SCUH accepts the voluntarily returned honorary degree, the person's name will be struck from Simon Fraser University's record of honorary graduates, and the person must return the honorary degree parchment to the Secretary of Senate. The Secretary of Senate shall notify the Chair of the SCUH that the honorary degree parchment has been voluntarily returned. The University will make a brief public statement that the recipient has returned their honorary degree and are no longer considered an honorary graduate of the University. The public statement will not identify the reason(s) the degree was returned.

If the recipient elects to make representations respecting the matter under consideration or any allegation of fact set out in the notice, the person or their representative may submit such representations in writing to the Secretary of Senate within the time prescribed in the notice.

If the recipient fails to respond within the time prescribed, the Secretary of Senate will request that the SCUH proceed in accordance with this procedure.

Recommendation by SCUH

If the person has made representations, those representations and all other relevant documentation will be sent to the SCUH for its consideration. The SCUH may seek other publicly-available or objectively-confirmed information it determines relevant to the request to revoke an honorary degree (for example, criminal conviction following exhaustion of all appeal avenues, misconduct censure by the recipient's professional organization, etc.) and may engage in consultation with community members or identified experts on a confidential basis. If additional information arises from such research or consultation that SCUH will consider, the recipient will be notified and have an opportunity to make supplemental representations in writing to the Secretary of Senate within the time prescribed in the notice. If the recipient fails to respond within the time prescribed, the Secretary of Senate will request that the SCUH proceed in accordance with this procedure. After due consideration of all relevant information (including any supplemental representations from the recipient) in an in-camera session of SCUH, the SCUH will vote on whether the honorary degree should be revoked.

Quorum for consideration or revoking an honorary degree shall be 2/3's (two-thirds) of the committee membership.

The vote to recommend the revocation of an honorary degree will require 2/3's (two-third's) majority vote of the SCUH members present.

If SCUH does not vote in favour of recommending the revocation of the degree, the secretary to SCUH will write to the individual(s) who requested the degree be revoked and the recipient of the honorary degree to inform them that the honorary degree will remain as originally awarded.

If SCUH votes in favour of recommending the revocation of the degree, the SCUH Chair shall prepare for Senate a report that contains its recommendation and reasons to revoke the honorary degree.

Consideration by Senate

Senate shall consider the report, recommendation, and reasons in an in-camera session of Senate. Revocation of the honorary degree will require 2/3's (two-third's) majority vote of the Senators present to revoke the honorary degree.

If Senate does not vote in favour of revoking the honorary degree, then the Secretary of Senate will write to the individual(s) who requested the degree be revoked and the recipient of the honorary degree to inform them that the honorary degree will remain as originally awarded.

If Senate votes in favour of revoking the honorary degree, the recipient shall be informed of the decision and be instructed to return their honorary degree parchment. The person's name shall be struck from Simon Fraser University's records of honorary graduates and the person shall lose all rights and privileges associated with their honorary degree.

The University will make a brief public statement that the recipient has had their honorary degree revoked and are no longer considered an honorary graduate of the University. The public statement may identify the reason(s) the degree was revoked.

Further Requests

If either SCUH does not vote in favour of recommending the revocation of the honorary degree, or Senate does not vote in favour of revoking the honorary degree, then the matter will be considered closed, any

further requests to revoke shall be dismissed unless such further requests present substantial new evidence that was not available at the time the initial request was considered.

Confidentiality of Process

All deliberations of the SCUH and Senate must be kept strictly confidential, and any recommendations arising from such deliberations must be treated confidentially by the body or persons in receipt of such recommendations.

Procedure Review

Following the consideration of a request to revoke a degree SCUH will review procedures and make necessary adjustments to ensure a fair and thorough process.

Honorary Degree Procedures

Nominations

Nominations for Honorary Degrees may be submitted at any time during the year.

The Secretary to the Senate Committee on University Honours (SCUH) shall annually issue an invitation for the university and broader community to submit nominations for Honorary Degrees. The call for nominations will encourage nominations that reflect the social and cultural diversity of Canada as well as the academic diversity of the university.

SCUH determines the format that nominations are expected to follow and the specific information required within the nomination. Normally, the nominations must include:

- a. the name of the nominator (s) and their relationship, if any, to the nominee
- b. description of the manner in which the nominee has met the eligibility criteria set out in the policy
- c. the nominees' connection to SFU or the province of British Columbia (if applicable)
- d. how the nominee personifies SFU's values
- e. other supporting documentation such as news articles, publications and links to online information (not to exceed 10 pages)

Nominations for an honorary degree are considered confidential, and under no circumstances should the nominee be informed that they are being nominated for an honorary degree.

Letters of support should not be included in the nomination package.

Selection

After the closing date of the call for nominations, the Secretary to SCUH will review all applications to ensure they meet the eligibility criteria set out in the policy and develop a list of candidates that will be considered for an honorary degree. Any concerns about eligibility will be referred to the Chair of SCUH.

SCUH members will be asked to review all files and provide a ranking of those nominated.

Nominations will be reviewed using the criteria set out in the policy.

In addition, members of SCUH will consider:

- whether the nominee's achievements, contribution, service, or leadership to the community are extraordinary and inspirational and have had a transformative impact; and
- why SFU, in particular, should confer an honorary degree on that nominee, including whether the nominee has a past, current, or potential connection to the values, teaching, research, or community service priorities of the University.

At the first meeting of SCUH, the tallied rankings will be reviewed, each case reviewed and a longlist established.

Long-listed nominations will then be assigned to members of SCUH with the purpose of validating information contained within the nomination package against publicly available information and determining if crucial information was omitted from the nomination package. The written assessments will be shared with the Secretary of SCUH will add the information to the nomination packages.

Prior to second meeting SCUH members will review the additional information and complete a second ranking of the long-listed nominees.

At a second meeting the additional information and rankings will be discussed and SCUH will finalize the list of nominees that will be presented to Senate for confirmation.

In developing the list of nominations for an honorary degree, the SCUH shall endeavor to recognize:

- individuals with diverse backgrounds and fields of endeavour;
- individuals with a diversity of breadth of impact (provincial, national, and international); and
- both established and emerging leaders.

Senate shall receive information about each nominee for an honorary degree including the reason(s) for nomination, the recommended degree and background information on the nominee. The name of the nominator will not be included in the Senate materials. Senate will approve honorary degree recipients during the closed session of a Senate meeting, using a simple majority vote.

Each approved nomination shall remain valid for a period of three years.

If more than one year has elapsed since Senate approved a nomination, SCUH will review the nomination to determine if there have been material changes to the nominations (i.e., something has happened since approving the honorary degree that may change the decision of SCUH or Senate to award the degree).

Confirmation of Honorary Degree recipients

The President shall contact the nominees that were approved by Senate and inform them that the University wishes to award them an honorary degree.

The President shall determine which convocation ceremony each approved honorary degree recipient shall attend.

If an intended recipient declines the offer of an honorary degree, the President may select another approved nominee to receive an honorary degree.

When the nominee agrees to receive an honorary degree, they will receive a copy of their nomination package to review, with the nominator details redacted, to ensure the submission is accurate and that it does not contain any material misrepresentations. The intended recipient will be asked to indicate in writing that the nomination is accurate and that there is no additional information that the university should be aware of in its consideration of the honorary degree.

If material misrepresentations are found or the intended recipient shares additional information that should have been considered by SCUH or Senate, the President will determine if the misrepresentation or additional information is related to the reasons the honorary degree was granted, and if so shall inform SCUH who will determine if the degree should be granted or if the offer of an honorary degree should be withdrawn.

Nominations of more than one individual (or a group) for an honorary degree.

In exceptional situations the University will accept honorary degree nominations that encompass more than one individual.

In the assessment of a nomination for an honorary degree that includes more than one person, the nomination must demonstrate the achievements are shared amongst the individuals, and that achievements are not mainly the result of one person

When more than one individual is awarded an honorary degree, they will receive the honorary degree together at one convocation ceremony. Each individual shall receive an honorary degree parchment with their name.

Confidentiality of Process

All deliberations of the SCUH and Senate must be kept strictly confidential, and any lists arising from such deliberations must be treated confidentially by the body or persons in receipt of such lists.

Procedure Review

SCUH will review procedures annually and make necessary adjustments to ensure a fair and thorough process.