

Awarding of Honorary Degrees

Academic Operations Manual

Approving Authority: SJU Senate Council

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Office of Accountability: Vice-President Academic and Dean

Administrative Responsibility: Governance Committee of Senate Council

Policy Statement

The St. Jerome's University Act gives the Board the power to grant honorary degrees. SJU Senate Council recommends candidates to the Board for approval. The Chancellor confers honorary degrees that have been recommended by SJU Senate Council and approved by the Board.

Appendix A
Supplemental Information
Awarding a St. Jerome's University
Honorary Doctorate

An honorary degree is the highest honour conferred by the University. Through the conferring of honorary degrees, St. Jerome's University recognizes outstanding achievement, either academic or through service to society or the church. Acceptance of an honorary degree by a candidate brings honour to both the recipient and the University.

The SJU Senate Council Terms of Reference provides for SJU Senate Council to establish and approve guidelines for the selection of candidates for the awarding of honorary degrees. SJU Senate Council reviews suggestions for candidates to whom honorary degrees might be awarded, and recommends for approval to the Board. The Board approves the candidates for SJU Honorary Degrees.

SJU Honorary Degrees Awarded

St. Jerome's University confers the following honorary degree, *honoris causa*:

- For extraordinary contributions to Catholic culture and values, to academia, and/or to society: **DTheo** (Doctor of Theology). This degree is normally awarded to people whose area of scholarly research is in fields of interest to St. Jerome's University; or those who have made significant contributions toward the enhancement of the understanding of the Catholic intellectual tradition; to the advancement of St. Jerome's University; or to the betterment of culture, or society, or the local community.

SJU Senate Council Nominating Committee for Honorary Degrees

The composition of the SJU Senate Council Nominating Committee for SJU Honorary Degree Nomination (the "committee") consists of eight (8) members:

- President and Vice Chancellor (Chair)
- Chancellor
- Vice President Academic and Dean
- One Student member selected by the Student Union
- Three Faculty members elected by Senate
- One Staff member elected by the Staff

The Registrar attends as an observer.

The committee accepts nominations from faculty committees, individual members of the university community and others. The committee will take an active role in generating nominations.

Criteria

The committee will review each nominee in terms of whether he or she personifies the core values of St. Jerome's University, and exemplifies the personal and professional characteristics to which we wish our students to aspire. People recognized with an Honorary Degree should be

an example and inspiration to SJU students and graduates. Decisions taken by the committee will seek to reflect the diverse social and cultural character of Canada as well as the academic diversity of St. Jerome's University. The committee will take the following considerations into account when selecting candidates:

- Advancement of the mission of St. Jerome's University
- Betterment of culture, society or the local community.

When considering nominations, the SJU Senate Council Nominating Committee for Honorary Degrees will review candidates with a view to ensuring that the candidate's life and work reflects the nature and mission of St. Jerome's University.

The range of achievement considered by the committee is broad and includes such areas as research/scholarship, particularly in fields of interest to St. Jerome's University, Theology, as well as professional and/or voluntary service including exceptional service or significant contribution to the University, or the local, national or international community. The committee looks especially to honour those whose contributions have not yet been widely recognized.

It is not essential that a candidate have a direct connection with SJU, but there should be a compelling reason why the University should confer its highest honour on an individual at a particular time.

On occasion, special efforts may be made to mark the time or circumstance by placing special emphasis on some particular field of endeavour.

Exclusions

The following persons are not eligible for consideration for an SJU honorary degree:

- Current members of the Board of Governors or SJU Senate Council;
- Current members of the faculty or staff of the University;
- Current students;
- Persons whose work or life does not reflect the mission of SJU.

In Absentia - Normally, honorary degrees are not awarded posthumously or *in absentia*.

SJU Honorary Degree Protocol

In September each year, the Executive Assistant to the Board will make a call for nominations to the members of the SJU community. Nominations will be accepted from anyone in the SJU community. Individuals may not nominate themselves or members of their family. The nomination and approval process for SJU honorary degrees is confidential, and all those involved in the process are expected to maintain that confidentiality.

Nomination Package

All nominations must be submitted in writing. The nomination package should include:

- A nomination letter (no more than 2-3 pages) from a member of the SJU community and signed by one or more faculty members internal to St. Jerome's University
- A **clear** statement (up to 300 words) stating the reasons why the nominee should be honoured by SJU at this time. This statement should provide a brief overview of the outstanding achievements/contributions this individual has made that have led to the nomination and why it is believed that SJU in particular should consider conferring an honorary degree on this individual
- A letter signed by the Vice President Academic and Dean at SJU supporting the nomination
- A current *curriculum vitae*, including current mailing and email addresses
- Links to online information, or other attachments, or any other appropriate materials such as news articles, or other literature that would help in the committee's evaluation

Nominators should **not** seek letters of reference or support from individuals external to St. Jerome's University because of the requirement for strict confidentiality. The committee may contact the nominators should it require further information to make an evaluation.

Completed nomination packages should be sent to the Executive Assistant to the Board at St. Jerome's University. All information received by the committee is held in confidence.

Candidates for honorary degrees will be distinguished people in one way or another. It is the task of the committee to investigate and judge their relative merits and make preferential choices. The committee will consider the following questions to guide their deliberations in selecting candidates:

- In what ways do this individual's contributions reflect and advance the mission of St. Jerome's University?
- In what ways is this candidate's achievement truly outstanding?
- In what ways has scholarship, a profession, or some significant segment of society benefitted by this contribution?
- Will this person's achievement be seen to be important and exemplary to the students who will graduate at that convocation?
- Has this person been sufficiently recognized already by other honours and awards?
- Has this person been appropriately recognized by the field or profession in which (s)he is said to excel?
- Why is it appropriate for SJU to honour this person at this time?
- Does this candidate help SJU achieve the goal of reflecting, in the honours it bestows, the Catholic values of SJU?

Procedure

The committee recommends nominees to SJU Senate Council for consideration as candidates for SJU honorary degrees. SJU Senate Council recommends candidates to the Board for approval. The Board awards the SJU Honorary degrees.

The committee will meet periodically to consider nominations. Only candidates who have the support of at least two-thirds of the members of the committee will be forwarded to the SJU Senate Council for approval. The committee may, where it chooses, defer consideration of candidates pending further information. Committee discussions are confidential, in the event that a candidate is not approved for consideration in the pool (i.e. not forwarded to SJU Senate Council), a brief note will be sent to the nominators, copied to the VPAD, indicating why a nomination was not successful.

Once approved by SJU Senate Council a recommendation is made to the Board of SJU to approve the candidate(s) for addition to the “pool” of potential honorary degree recipients, from which candidates will be chosen for the awarding of the SJU Honorary Degree at particular convocations. Choice of SJU Honorary Degree recipients and convocation speakers will reside with the President. The President will normally consult with the relevant Senate Nominating Committee for Honorary Degrees and the VPAD.

Normally not more than two honorary degrees will be conferred at any convocation ceremony.

Decision

The Committee will consider only complete nominations and may:

- Recommend the nominee for approval by SJU Senate Council and the Board for an SJU Honorary Degree, or
- Reject the nomination. If a nomination is rejected, the file is destroyed.

Information on the action of the Committee regarding nominations will remain confidential.

The SJU Senate Council and Board will, at its next meeting, receive the names of those recommended for approval and will vote on each name separately at an *in camera* session. In unusual cases, such as Special Convocation, such voting may take place by mail or confidential e-mail ballot. Those approved for the awarding of an Honorary Degree will be added to the list of “approved” candidates, which is maintained by the Executive Assistant to the Board.

Prior to each Convocation ceremony, the President will review the approved list of Honorary Degree candidates and will choose the recipients to be honoured at the SJU Convocation Liturgy. Wherever practical, degrees will be awarded within five years of their approval by Senate Council and the Board.

Publicizing the Nomination and the Award

If a nominator informs the nominee, or anyone else, about the nomination, it must be on the basis that such communication is to be treated as strictly confidential communication and on the basis that such nomination is but a first step in a process, which may or may not result in an honorary degree being granted.

The University will not release the outcome of any individual nomination, except by making a public announcement of the honorary degree recipients for a particular Convocation. The names approved by SJU Senate Council and Board, will not be made public until this time. Members of SJU Senate Council and Board are to treat as confidential any information regarding approved candidates.

The President will determine the timing of the public announcement.

Awarding

SJU Honorary degrees are awarded either at the year-end ceremony (Convocation Liturgy) or during a celebration honouring graduates receiving the Master of Catholic Thought. Recipients may be invited to give the Convocation address but may decline the invitation to do so. There is no expectation that an Honorary Degree will be awarded at every ceremony. Honorary Degrees will be awarded only when exemplary candidates have been identified and approved.

Honorary degrees are not awarded *in absentia*. An exception may be made only when an honorary degree recipient has accepted and arrangements have been made for its awarding but extenuating and unforeseen circumstances (such as sudden ill health or inability to travel) prevent the individual's attendance.

Honorary degrees are not awarded posthumously. An exception may be made only when the honorary degree recipient has accepted and arrangements have been made for its awarding prior to the individual's death.

The Executive Assistant to the Board prepares the citation for the honorary degree, in consultation with the President and in partnership with the presenter. The citation should be no longer than three (3) minutes in length. The Chancellor of the University confers the Honorary Degree and the VPAD hoods the candidate. The President presents the framed Honorary Degree parchment.

If possible and deemed appropriate, nominators are encouraged to organize supplementary events to compliment the convocation activities such as a special lecture by the honorary degree recipient.

Privileges

Privileges accompany the conferral of an honorary degree. The recipient will be:

- A member of convocation
- Referred to as Doctor at all future university functions
- A member of the platform party at future Convocation ceremonies
- Receive invitations to all future convocation ceremonies

Rescission of St. Jerome's Honorary Degrees

The Board, acting on the recommendation of SJU Senate Council or on its own initiative but after a report by SJU Senate Council, may revoke an Honorary Degree awarded by St. Jerome's University and all privileges connected therewith of any holder of the same who shall have been

convicted of any criminal offence, or whose name shall have been removed for misconduct by a properly constituted legal authority from any official register of members of the profession to which he/she belongs or whose conduct, in the opinion of the Board, shall constitute a breach of any agreement made with the University as a condition of the conferment of such degree.

The Board may restore, on cause being shown, and after report by the SJU Senate Council, any person so deprived, to the degree, distinction or privileges previously enjoyed by him/her without further examination.