Honorary Degree Guidelines and Procedures

In the Charter of Gettysburg College, Article II, paragraph B provides that:

The trustees on their own initiative, or the faculty, by and on the order of or with consent of a duly convened quorum of the trustees, may award and confirm such degrees, as are properly granted by institutions of learning with respect to the liberal arts, science, or professions, or branches thereof, to such students of said College or to such other persons as by reason of their proficiency in learning, or other meritorious distinction, shall be deemed graduates or other persons so honored, diplomas or certificates, under the common seal of Gettysburg College, to authenticate and perpetuate the memory of such graduation or award.

In the Bylaws of the College, Article VIII, sections 1 and 2 state:

Such degrees may be awarded by the College as are authorized by the Board of Trustees and approved by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Honorary degrees may from time to time be awarded by the Board of Trustees.

In describing the duties of the trustee Committee on Academic Affairs, Article IV, Section 4b of the Bylaws states:

[It is the responsibility of the Committee] to receive and encourage nominations for honorary degrees and to make recommendations to the Board of Trustees on candidates most worthy to receive such degrees.

PROCEDURES

1. Suggestions and nominations for honorary degrees shall be made in writing, using the appropriate form whenever possible. These nominees may also be considered as potential Commencement speakers. The form, guidelines, and procedures are available from the Provost’s Office.

The nominator should be clearly identified by signature and address. Suggestions and nominations should be addressed to the Provost of the College, Gettysburg College. All nominations will be acknowledged in writing by the Provost’s Office. All nominations remain confidential and should not be discussed with the nominee.
2. The Provost of the College will send a request for nominations each fall with a deadline of SEPTEMBER 30. to the members of the Board of Trustees, members of the Faculty, members of the College Relations staff, representative student leadership bodies, the Alumni Association, and other interested constituencies of the college.

3. All nominations received are placed in a pool of candidates maintained by the Provost’s Office. If not selected for a degree within three years, the candidate is removed from the pool. The nominator will be notified of the removal and offered the opportunity to renominate for a second three-year period.

4. Honorary degrees are awarded by vote of the Board of Trustees (based on the criteria listed in the “Guidelines”) and may be conferred at any official convocation of the College or at other special events. By convention, the spring commencement speaker is awarded an honorary degree.

5. Chronology of nomination and deliberation of candidates for honorary degrees.

   a. The Honorary Degree Committee—a sub-committee of the Academic Affairs Committee consisting of three Trustees (usually appointed from the roster of the Academic Affairs Committee), the Provost, a Faculty representative (usually the Faculty representative to Academic Affairs but subject to availability), and a student representative (again usually the student representative but subject to availability)—will review the current pool of nominees, including those newly received, during January and February of the year prior to that in which the honorary degree is bestowed.

   b. No later than the beginning of March, the Honorary Degree Committee will present to the Academic Affairs Committee and to the President a short list of candidates for discussion and prioritization.

   c. During March and April, the list will be vetted by the President’s Council (or other body to be designated by the President).

   d. At the May meeting of the Academic Affairs Committee, the final list will be discussed and approved by the Academic Affairs Committee and brought to the full Board for approval.

6. If approved by the Board, the list of degree recipients is forwarded to the President, who extends the appropriate invitations for the awards. When offering the degree, the President discusses with the nominee the College’s hopes and expectations for a continuing relationship and the nominee’s availability at the appropriate time.

7. The President, in consultation with the Provost, will determine the particular honorary degree to be awarded to each candidate from a roster of appropriate degrees.
8. The Provost will update the Academic Affairs Committee periodically on the status of offers to potential honorary degree recipients.

GUIDELINES

1. In the awarding of honorary degrees, the Committee should seek out and designate for honorary degrees persons of true distinction who, upon being honored, bring honor and distinction to the College.

2. The College recognizes the value to itself and to its constituencies of recognizing certain categories of attainment for recognition:
   a. Distinguished clergy and laypersons of the universal Christian church, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
   b. Distinguished alumni/ae.
   c. Distinguished artists, scholars, and members of the learned professions.
   d. Distinguished members of the corporate and business community.
   e. Distinguished humanitarians and members of the public sector.

3. In selecting honorary degree recipients for specific occasions, the Committee will consider the purpose and theme of the event and the appropriateness of awarding honorary degrees to persons related to the purpose or theme of this occasion. Consideration will be given to awarding all honorary degrees at commencement to persons whose contributions are outstanding in a specific field. Those fields may include:
   - The Arts
   - Public Life and Government
   - The Humanities and Social Sciences
   - The Natural and Applied Sciences

4. Normally, no more than eight (8) honorary degrees shall be conferred during any one year, September 1 to August 31. The Board of Trustees may declare an exception.

5. Gettysburg College does not engage in illegal discrimination in its programs, activities, and policies on account of race, color, religion, ethnic or national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, or being differently abled. The President’s Council shall make specific efforts to nominate women, persons of color and persons whose primary language is other than English for honorary degrees.
6. Voting members of the Board of Trustees and members of the active faculty and administration of the College are ineligible to receive an honorary degree.

7. Special arrangements:
   a. No charge will be made for the hoods of the honorary degree recipients.
   b. No honorary degree shall be conferred in the absence of the recipient, except for reasons which the Board of Trustees may deem sufficient to excuse the recipient's absence.
   c. No honorary degree is to be confirmed without the written acceptance of the recipient.
   d. All recipients must wear academic regalia. A brief statement giving the reasons for the degree will be read at the ceremony.

8. The record of the actions of the Academic Affairs Committee relating to honorary degrees is confidential; information about honorary degrees will be released by the President’s Office.

Nomination form should be emailed to:

Maureen Forrestal
Assistant Provost for Student Scholarly Engagement and
Dean of Fellowships, Scholarships, and Undergraduate Research & Creative Activity
Office of the Provost
Gettysburg College
Gettysburg, PA 17325

E-mail: HonoraryDegreeNominations@gettysburg.edu