To: **President Stephen Toope**

From: **President's Advisory Committee on Honorary Degrees**

Re: **Procedures and Criteria relating to the awarding of Honorary Degrees at UBC**

Date: **May 18, 2007**

PROCEDURES AND CRITERIA RELATING TO THE AWARDING OF HONORARY DEGREES AT UBC

PREAMBLE

Since the creation of UBC Okanagan in 2005, and considering the authority of UBC's two Senates - the Vancouver Senate and the Okanagan Senate - to confer honorary degrees, it was deemed desirable to review the procedures relating to such degrees. Such a review also provides a useful opportunity to revise the current criteria so as to ensure that UBC honorary degrees at both campuses are granted under standards that are consistent with those of the best universities in the world; and to address any procedural matters that have been identified over the last few years.

Accordingly, a President's Advisory Committee has been established to review UBC's approach to identifying candidates for honorary degrees and their presentation for approval by each of the Senates. The terms of reference of the Committee indicate that it should give attention to the following matters:

- the criteria for awarding honorary degrees;
- the procedures for soliciting nominations;
- the format of the nomination dossiers and related materials;
- guiding principles and procedures for use by Senate committees in assessing the dossiers and making recommendations;
- the nature and extent of any relationship between the practices at UBCO and UBCV;
- communications between Ceremonies, Public Affairs, the Secretariat to the Senates, the relevant Committees, and the President;
- staff support for the above activities;
- the budgetary impact of any recommendations that are made.

Consistent with the above terms of reference, the present advisory committee has not attended to aspects relating to honorary degrees that arise beyond the approval of the two Senates (i.e. subsequent communications with recipients; the format of convocation ceremonies; etc.)

The Committee membership is:

- Michael Isaacson
- Jane Hutton
- Sally Thorne

The Director of Ceremonies and the Assistant Registrar, Senate & Curriculum Services are advisory to the Committee.

The Committee met with President Toope, and thereafter formulated a set of guidelines as provided in this report.

GUIDELINES

- **Committee membership**. The responsibility for soliciting nominations and bringing forward recommendations should continue to be undertaken, separately, by the Tributes Committee of the Vancouver Senate and the Policies and Procedures Committee of the Okanagan Senate. The President and Chancellor should both be voting members of both committees with respect to honorary degree considerations, and should normally be present for deliberations on such matters. The Chairs of the two Committees should confer occasionally so as to ensure a suitable coordination of the activities of the two committees.

- **Committee Support**. As a shift to current practice, and recognizing that the solicitation, assessment and approval of nominations are responsibilities of the Senates, it is proposed that the Senate Secretariat provide support to the relevant Senate Committees up to and including the approval of recommendations by the two Senates. Thereafter, the cases are handed to the Ceremonies Office for the purposes of contacting nominees through to their participation in ceremonies. Because of the background, knowledge and expertise on these matters that resides in the Ceremonies Office, the Director of Ceremonies should continue to participate in the deliberations of the committees, at least for a transition period of a few years. As well the Associate Secretary of the Senates* should participate in the deliberations of the committees. (The Director of Ceremonies is currently a member of the Tributes Committee of the Vancouver Senate only, and the Associate Secretary of the Senates is not a member of either committee. The Committees may wish to review their membership in this regard.)

- **Number of degrees**. The number of honorary degrees ultimately awarded each year is related to the number of invitations that are approved by the Senates, the proportion of individuals who accept invitations, and the number of postponed acceptances that are brought forward from a previous year. In the last few years, the number of honorary degrees conferred at the Vancouver campus has been approximately 12 per year (10 in May and 2 in November); and it has been 1-2 at the Okanagan campus. It is recommended that the number of nominations that are approved each year by the Senates should be such that the number

* It is intended that this additional title of the Assistant Registrar Enrolment Services will be brought forward shortly from the relevant Senate committees as a recommendation to the Secretary and the Chair of the Senates.

awarded each year is unlikely to exceed 10 at the Vancouver campus and 1 at the Okanagan campus.

- **Nomination form**. There will be a single nomination form that will include an indication of the Senate to which the nomination should be directed. The form will be modernized and made readily available through the Senates' web-sites. Nominations will need to conform more closely to specified format requirements than in the past. Specifically, the nomination will need to be limited to a prescribed length, and must include 2 - 5 letters from distinguished referees. There will also be a minimum amount of required information, without which a nomination will not be considered. A nomination should describe how the nominee fits the stated criteria, and the connection with UBC if any. It is preferred that the nomination includes a full curriculum vitae, but as minimum should include a summary curriculum vitae, or a biographical sketch of the nominee. (It is entirely appropriate to provide references to web-sites containing this information.)

- **Choice of campus**. The nominee may choose to accept, defer or decline a degree at a particular campus, but it is not possible for the nominee to choose to receive the degree at the other campus. Those deferring acceptance may normally do so for no more than two years. However, the period of deferral may be extended by the Ceremonies Office, in consultation with the relevant committee chair, if considered appropriate.

- **Master list of nominees**. The Secretariat is requested to maintain, and make available to committee members, a single updated list of nominee names that includes the following: current nominations submitted to both committees; intended campus; nominations from previous years that remain active (with an indication of the final year of consideration); nominations recommended by either committee; and past degree recipients. For each name there should be an indication of the basis of the nomination (the sphere of contribution and the affiliation with UBC if any), and any special notes. If the same name has been nominated independently for the two campuses, the Committee chairs will confer in order to select the committee that initially considers the nomination.

- **Solicitation of nominations**. The Committees will proactively solicit nominations from Senators, Deans, Heads and Directors, and the campus and alumni communities. Any individual, including the President, the Chancellor and committee members, may nominate candidates for an honorary degree at either campus, by the stated deadline and following the appropriate format. In exceptional circumstances, nominations may be brought to the Committee on an urgent basis through the Office of the President, or may emerge through committee discussion and consensus. The Secretariat is available to provide advice on the submission of nominations.

- **Schedule**. The deadline for nominations each year should be approximately September 15. Each Committee will likely meet twice following the deadline: once to develop a short-list of the nominations and to determine any additional information that may be required; and a second time to finalize the list of recommended nominees to be taken to the respective Senate. The committee recommendations are brought forward to the November or December Senate meetings.

- **Adjudication**. All current nominees and nominees brought forward from previous years should be considered by the committees, and either (i) included in the recommendations taken to the Senate, (ii) removed from future consideration, or (iii) retained for future consideration for up to three cycles in total. The adjudication process should be modernized and handled through web-sites and/or e-mails to the extent possible. Thus, the nomination packages should be available to committee members through a web-site with password access. (As well, committee members may review hard copies of nominations in the Secretariat offices.) The master list of nominees, as described above, will be e-mailed or made available electronically in a secure way, in confidence, to committee members.

- **Recommendation to Senate**. The committee report brought to each Senate should include a list of recommended names, with a brief justification for each. The report is considered by each Senate in camera. The committees should not recommend names to Senate on a provisional basis, nor should the committees present candidates in any rank order.

- **Parchment**. For standard degree parchments, the campus is to be identified through the phrase "the Vancouver Senate of the University of British Columbia …" or "the Okanagan Senate of the University of British Columbia …", as appropriate. Honorary degree parchments are entirely in Latin and do not make reference to the Senates, the campus or the city. The Committee is of the view that it is appropriate to make some reference to the campus, and suggest replacing the phrase "Signed at the Annual Congregation" by "Signed at the Okanagan Annual Congregation" or signed at the "Vancouver Annual Congregation", as appropriate.

- **Criteria**. The criteria are identical for both campuses. The stated criteria are as follows:

  The award of an Honorary Degree is recognition by the University of British Columbia of distinguished achievement or of outstanding service. The criteria for the award of an Honorary Degree are excellence, eminence, and accomplishment. Nominees must be exceptionally distinguished: scholars, creative artists, public servants, persons prominent in the community and the professions, and others who have made significant contributions locally, nationally or globally.

  Honorary degrees are not normally awarded to those who currently hold political office, including Senators, nor to current or former UBC faculty members, nor those whose contributions may be considered to be no longer of current interest or at previous levels of significance. In approving candidates for Honorary Degrees, the Senates strive for diversity of background, disciplines, and spheres of contribution. A nomination that may possibly be controversial will need to pass the test: "is UBC willing to deal with any and all possible consequences?"

  Because former faculty members will no longer normally be eligible for Honorary Degrees, but should sometimes be recognized in some way, the two Senate Committees should confer and consult on the possible establishment of a new recognition, such as "Distinguished

Emeritus Professor". It is recognized that corresponding policies on this matter may be distinct at the two campuses.

- **Public announcement**. Committee members should hold lists of nominees in strict confidence in perpetuity. Senators are reminded that all names brought to the Senates are strictly confidential, except for those names that are publicly announced, and then only after a public announcement is made. The Ceremonies Office is responsible for the public announcement of those nominees who have accepted nominations for the coming Congregation ceremonies. This announcement should be made with notable publicity in coordination with the Public Affairs Office, and should include photographs, a press release, and articles in UBC Reports and the University's web-site.

RECOMMENDATION

President Toope is invited to approve the report as presented herein and to forward it to the relevant Committees of the Senates, for their endorsement and transmittal for information to the September 2007 meetings of the Senates. (In case of possible changes introduced by either committee, coordination between the two committees and the President will be needed to ensure that the identical report is brought forward to the two Senates.)