GUIDE TO SUBMITTING REQUESTS
TO AWARD HONORARY DEGREES

August 2012
I. Introduction

This guide will assist colleges with submissions of requests to the Central Office to award honorary degrees. The guide explains the honorary degree criteria and approval process, includes sample board resolutions, and references a CUNY website for a schedule of dates by which requests must be submitted to the Central Office.

Questions about this guide or requests for assistance during the submission process should be directed to the Office of Program Review, Articulation and Transfer at (212) 794-5391.

II. Registered Degrees

According to New York State law, any accredited institution of higher education authorized to award any earned baccalaureate or higher degree may confer any registered honorary degree. Community colleges may award any registered honorary associate degree. Below is a list of registered degrees.

Honorary Doctorates
Doctor of Civil Law (D.C.L.)
Doctor of Commercial Science (D.C.S.)
Doctor of Divinity (D.D.)
Doctor of Fine Arts (D.F.A.)
Doctor of Hebrew Letters (D.H.Litt.)
Doctor of Humane Letters (L.H.D.)
Doctor of Jewish Theology (D.J.T.)
Doctor of Laws (LL.D.)
Doctor of Letters (Litt.D.)
Doctor of Music (Mus.D.)
Doctor of Pedagogy (Pd.D.)
Doctor of Sacred Theology (S.T.D.)
Doctor of Science (Sc.D.)

Honorary Master's Degrees
Master of Humane Letters (L.H.M.)
Master of Letters (Litt.M.)
Master of Pedagogy (Pd.M.)

Honorary Associate Degrees
Associate of Civil Law (A.C.L.)
Associate of Commercial Science (A.C.S.)
Associate of Divinity (A.D.)
Associate of Fine Arts (A.F.A.)
Associate of Hebrew Letters (A.H.Litt.)
Associate of Humane Letters (A.H.L.)
Associate of Jewish Theology (A.J.T.)
Associate of Laws (LL.A.)
Associate of Letters (A.Litt.)
Associate of Music (A.Mus.)
Associate of Pedagogy (A.Pd.)
Associate of Sacred Theology (A.S.T.)

III. CUNY Board Policy

Section 1.19 of CUNY’s Manual of General Policy (http://policy.cuny.edu/text/toc/mgp/) details the University’s policies regarding honorary degrees:

“A decision that The City University of New York confer an honorary degree on its own behalf or on behalf of one of its colleges shall rest on a consideration of the candidate's distinguished contribution to higher education in general or to the University or one of its colleges in particular or upon a consideration of the fact that the candidate has reflected signal honor upon the University or one of its colleges. A proposal to confer an honorary degree must, in all instances, be approved by the Chancellor and by the Board of Trustees. (BT-1982-02-22, AI-007-_A)

“The nomination of a candidate for an honorary degree on behalf of one of the colleges shall be forwarded to the Chancellor with the approval of the president of the college, provided that a majority affirmative vote to recommend the degree has been cast by the appropriate faculty body. The nomination of a candidate for a University Honorary Degree shall be forwarded to the Board of Trustees by the Chancellor. (BT-1982-02-22, AI-007-_A)

“The Chancellor will convene a committee of faculty from the University community, representing various colleges as well as the University Faculty Senate. The Chancellor shall consult with this committee on nominations for University Honorary Degrees. The Chancellor, however, shall be solely responsible for determining the nominees and for making the final recommendations to the Board of Trustees. (BT-1982-02-22, AI-007-_A)”

IV. Criteria

Honorary degrees are intended to serve as a means by which the University can recognize the achievements of persons who have made significant contributions to the progress of the University or to its colleges and to the principles for which the institutions stand or to their academic or professional disciplines. It is anticipated that honorary degrees will be proposed only for persons who clearly merit such consideration. The chancellor and the
presidents should first consider awarding the medals of merit that have been provided for the recognition of service and achievement. In general, candidates for honorary degrees should fall in one or more of the following categories:

1. Persons of national or international reputation in an academic discipline that holds a significant place in the curriculum of the awarding college;

2. Persons who have made significant contributions in either thought or action to American higher education or in a professional field closely related to an academic interest of the University or the awarding college;

3. Persons who have made significant contributions over a sustained period of time to the development of major programs at the University or at one of its colleges;

4. Persons who have given long and distinguished service to the University or one of its colleges, including those who have been in its employ and who have been retired or otherwise separated from the University or one of its colleges for a period of at least three years;

5. Persons who have made major contributions to furthering principles that are at the center of the University’s purpose and mission.

For purposes of considering candidates for honorary degrees, elected officials representing the State or City of New York shall not be eligible for consideration during their terms of office.

(Last revised by the CUNY Council of Presidents, 9/8/81.)

V. Submitting Requests to Award Honorary Degrees and Approval Process

A. Once the appropriate campus faculty body has approved the candidate(s), the college president or dean should submit the following items to the chancellor, with a copy to the executive vice chancellor and university provost:

- A cover letter that briefly describes the honorary degree candidate(s)
- A completed “Request to Award an Honorary Degree” form (see attached) for each candidate
- For each candidate, a 300-500 word statement that describes the candidate’s merits. Please include in the statement any connection to CUNY, particularly alumni status and philanthropic activities. Please do not send Wikipedia entries, a candidate’s CV, or an unusually long biography in lieu of a statement.
- One draft board resolution and explanation for all candidates (see samples below)
The cover letter and accompanying materials must be submitted by the date listed on the website referenced later in this guide.

B. Please note that candidates must first be approved by the Board of Trustees Committee on Academic Program Planning and Research (CAPPR) and then by the full Board of Trustees. The president and the chief academic officer of the college will be informed by the Office of Program Review, Articulation and Transfer if the request is approved for consideration by the members of CAPPR.

Colleges will be asked to submit the board resolution and appropriate supporting materials to the University’s document sharing system, Sharepoint. (Since colleges already use Sharepoint to submit new academic programs, institutes and centers, at least one individual in the college’s academic affairs office will have access to Sharepoint and will know how to upload items for review by the members of CAPPR.)

C. A formal vote will be taken by the members of CAPPR. Approved candidates are forwarded to the full Board of Trustees for consideration and will appear on the board calendar.

D. A formal vote will be taken by the members of the Board of Trustees. Approved candidates are eligible to receive an honorary degree.

III. Sample Resolutions and Explanations

As indicated above, the college/school must provide a draft resolution and short explanation upon which board members will vote. The Office of Program Review, Articulation and Transfer will review the resolution for proper form. Only one resolution for the college is required, but the brief explanation should include cause for awarding an honorary degree to each candidate. Below are sample resolutions and explanations for various scenarios.

A. SINGLE HONOREE

RESOLVED, that the Macaulay Honors College award Merryl H. Tisch the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa, at the college’s annual commencement ceremony on June 5, 2012.

EXPLANATION: Merryl H. Tisch is currently the chancellor of the New York State Board of Regents and was first appointed to the Board in 1996. Chancellor Tisch is also chairperson of the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, an organization known for its work in youth and family services, housing, poverty programs, and neighborhood preservation.
B. **MULTIPLE HONOREES WITH A SINGLE TYPE OF DEGREE**


EXPLANATION: Shirley Rodriguez Remeneski has dedicated 21 years of service to the Bronx-Lebanon Hospital Center’s Board of Trustees and is its current board chair. Ms. Remeneski is also founder of 100 Hispanic Women, Inc., which provides needed education and career opportunities to Latinas.

Karen Musalo, who is a graduate of Brooklyn College, is clinical professor of law at the University of California, Hastings College of the Law, where she is also the founding director of the Refugee and Human Rights Clinic and director of the Center for Gender and Refugee Studies.

Albert P. Carey is chief executive officer of PepsiCo Americas Beverages, a unit of PepsiCo, the world’s second-largest food and beverage business. He currently serves on the board of Home Depot and on the corporate board of advisors for the National Council of La Raza, the largest national Latino civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States.

C. **MULTIPLE HONOREES WITH MULTIPLE DEGREES**

RESOLVED, that John Jay College award Judith Jamison the degree of Doctor of Letters, and both Michael Meltsner and Michael L. Perlin the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, at the college’s annual commencement ceremony on May 31, 2012.

EXPLANATION: Judith Jamison is artistic director emerita of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. In 1989, she succeeded Mr. Ailey as artistic director. During her 21 years in that capacity, she presided over the company’s historic engagements in South Africa and a 50-city global anniversary tour. Her numerous recognitions include the Kennedy Center Honor, a National Medal of Arts, and an American Choreography Award.

Michael Meltsner is the principal architect of the death penalty abolition movement in the United States, which he mobilized in the early 1960s while he was of counsel for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund. Mr. Meltsner is currently the George J. and Kathleen Waters Matthews Distinguished University Professor at Northeastern University’s School of Law. Mr. Meltsner is the author of several books including *Cruel and Unusual: The Supreme Court and Capital Punishment*, the book with which his work on the death penalty is most associated.
Michael Perlin is a professor of law at New York Law School. An internationally recognized expert on mental disability law, he has devoted his career to championing legal rights for people with mental disabilities. Author of 20 books and nearly 200 scholarly articles, Professor Perlin has said that his ninth book, *The Hidden Prejudice: Mental Disability on Trial*, published in 2000, represents his lifetime work.

**IV. Submission Deadlines**

In order for the proper vetting process to occur, corrections in format to be made, and document uploading to take place, the Office of Academic Affairs needs ample lead time to review honorary degree requests. Please refer to the CAPPR Deadline Calendar: [http://www.cuny.edu/academics/programs/resources/deadline-calendar.html](http://www.cuny.edu/academics/programs/resources/deadline-calendar.html)

Honorary degree requests must be submitted by the “Pre-final draft” dates.