

## A PRIMER-COURSE ON THE HISTORY OF THE HONORARY DEGREE PROCESS AT UK

### A. The State Law Empowering the Faculty and the Board Over Degrees, Honors and Honorary Degrees

When the University of Kentucky was in 1880 established by the Kentucky General Assembly as the independent A&M College, the laws adopted included those three quoted below, the last of which is KRS 164.240 today.

“The **Faculty** of the Agricultural and Mechanical College **shall have the power** to grant certificates to teachers, students of the college...” and

“only those students who [have] **attained the prescribed standard of proficiency** in the regular **course of studies... shall receive a diploma** from the college” and

(KRS 164.240 today): “Said board of trustees shall have power

**to grant degrees** to the **alumni** of the institution, [“alumni” was changed to “graduates” in 1934]

to prescribe the conditions upon which post-**graduate honors** shall be obtained by its **alumni** and **others**, and to confer such **honorary** degrees, [the phrase “by its alumni and others” was removed in 1934]

“**upon the recommendation of the faculty** of the institution, as they may think proper [“the institution” was changed to “the university in 1942”]

### B. Implementation of the State Law Empowering the Faculty and the Board of Trustees Over Degrees

The above statutory provisions established several distinct conceptual steps in exercise of authority:

- (1) **determination that a student had finished a prescribed standard of proficiency in the regular course of studies**, i.e., had attained a status of “**alumnus**” or “**graduate**.” Note that the meaning of the word “alumni” (or “graduate”) as placed into the law by the legislature did not mean a person who had already been conferred a degree, nor did it mean only a matriculate who was not as yet academically eligible for a degree. Rather, the word “alumni” (or “graduate”) has the specific meaning of students who have completed the academic conditions to receive, but who had not yet received, a degree granted by the Board of Trustees. The Faculty determine which students have attained the status of “alumnus” or “graduate” in the course of study and then the Faculty recommend to the Board of Trustees which of those “graduates” ought to receive a degree – i.e., under the above law, the Board does not make that determination as to who is “alumnus” or “graduate,” the Board becomes involved only in responding to the Faculty’s recommendation concerning the granting of a degree.
- (2) the subsequent decision to then grant to that alumnus/graduate a **degree**,

We can observe in the Minutes of the Faculty, contemporaneous with the fresh 1880 state law, the above meaning of the statutory language. For example, the 1881 minutes of the Faculty show the entry

“ [students names] presented themselves as candidates for **graduation** and for the **degree** of Bachelor of Arts ... On motion they were all recommended for the degrees named, provided that they render **satisfaction to the several professors** in whose departments they have not completed the **prescribed courses of study**.” (underlining added here)

### C. State Law Empowering the Faculty and the Board of Trustees Over Honors and Honorary Degrees

That 1880 law also prescribed two kinds of recipients of “honors” connected with degrees

- (a) persons who were “**alumni**,” (i.e. had just “graduated” by completion of a course of study at UK but who had not yet been conferred the degree) and
- (b) “**other**” recipients (e.g., distinguished citizens who had graduated, not necessarily from UK, at some earlier time in their life).

The 1880 state law then refers to the “**honors**” for both kinds of recipients as “post-graduate” **honors**,” because both kinds of recipients have “graduated,” although the former have not yet been conferred their UK “**degree**.” The 1880 law then defined that conferring of “such **honors**” (i.e., to either kind of recipient) is to confer “**honorary** degrees.”

Under the 1880 (and current, KRS 164.240) law, the Board has both roles of

- (3) the final authority in prescribing the conditions for “**honors**” to either kind of recipient and
- (4) conferring the **honorary** degrees upon individuals who have met the conditions.

Yet, the Board cannot perform prescribing the conditions for the **honors**, or to confer the attesting **honorary** degree, except “**upon the recommendation of the faculty**,” giving the Faculty final disapproval authority to limit what the Board can act upon for either the policies on conditions or on the merits individual case awards.

#### **D. The Faculty Exercises its Statutory Authority Concerning Honors and Honorary Degrees**

Over its first two decades as “the Faculty” of the independent A&M College, the Faculty repeatedly exercised its statutory authority in relation policy-making conditions for award of “**degrees with honors**” to **graduating students** and of [capitalized] “**Honorary Degrees**” to **others**.

Concerning the honors for academic performance as a student of the A&M College, Faculty committees were appointed “*to arrange a basis upon which **honors** should in the future be determined*” and “*to prepare a plan for better determination of **graduation honors***,” and the policy recommendations became adopted, and applied to individual cases: “*On ballot for first **honor** Miss Adams received five votes, Hobdy six. The latter was declared **valedictorian***.” Some of the policy discussions on conditions for **honors** for **graduates** were quite animated.

Concerning the **honors** for “**others**” whose meritorious activity was not in a capacity as an A&M College student, in 1892 the Faculty voted that “*a committee of five be appointed for the purpose of considering methods for the conferring of **Honorary Degrees***.” Early on, the Faculty developed on policies about recommendations “*for the **honorary degree** of M.S. As under the regulations, the Faculty could make no recommendation for the degree except in cases where prescribed work has been done, no action was taken.*” Similarly, the Faculty decided “*that it is inexpedient at present for this college to confer the degree of Ph.D. but that if the degree of D. Sc. would be acceptable to [potential nominee], the faculty should recommend to the Board of Trustees that this degree be conferred upon him as an **honorary degree***.” The Faculty also considered that persons to receive Honorary Degrees ought to attend the Commencement award ceremony, and at the urging of Professor A. M. Miller (who became the second dean of the Graduate School), “*the faculty prepare[d] resolutions setting forth their estimate of the services*” of persons being recommended for honorary doctorates (e.g., LL.D.)

#### **E. The Faculty Protects its Statutory Authority Concerning Honors and Honorary Degrees**

Under the state law, the Board could prescribe conditions for honorary degrees (i.e, policy on conditions of merit and circumstance), and confer the honorary degrees (decisions on individual cases) only “upon” the Faculty’s recommendation to the Board for Board final action. However, during a period it was becoming an increasingly frequent practice of the Board not to await receipt of recommendations that the Faculty had developed and approved for transmittal to the Board, but instead the Board on its own would identify potential honorary degree recipients and seek that the Faculty would perfunctorily endorse the award.

*“President Patterson then presented to the faculty the names of the following persons concerning whom it was Mr. Stoll’s wish that **the faculty** should take action looking to the conferring of **honorary degrees** in June next ...[three names listed] In an informal discussion which followed some **objection was raised**, not to the specific candidates named, but to the procedure which seems to increasingly prevail of having recommendations for such degrees come from members of the Board of Trustees rather than **originate with the faculty**, in whom **the charter** [i.e., state law] explicitly vests the right of naming the candidates for such degrees.” (1910)*

The Faculty were also disturbed by the increasing practice of seeking the Faculty’s *pro forma* concurrence to confer **honorary** graduate-level degree titles (e.g., honorary M.A.) when those same degrees would be awarded to matriculated students only after completion of prescribed academic work in residence, e.g., when “*Pres. Patterson nominated Hon. A. C. Stanley to be recommended to the Board of Trustees for the honorary degree of Master of Arts.*” The next time such a proposal was made to the Faculty, “*Professor Miller entered a protest against the practice of awarding the M.A. degree as an honorary degree while we are at the same time conferring it for University work.*” The Board “Committee on Minutes of the Faculty” (through which the Faculty’s minutes were “laid before the Board”) in June 1908 endorsed to the Board of Trustees a resolution from the Faculty

*“relating to advanced degrees, that it be the sense of this board that the awarding of **advanced degrees** in this institution be placed upon the higher plane, in accordance with the practice of the most advanced universities in this country; that **such degrees** should be given only in recognition of work accomplished under the direct supervision of the **University faculty**, except in the case of those which are customarily bestowed as **honorary degrees** in recognition of distinguished public services or scholarship.”*

The above reference by the Faculty to “distinguished public service or scholarship” is the earliest extant explicit record in the Board of Trustees minutes of the statutory body “the faculty of the university” exercising its role under the state law to recommend to the Board about conditions (here, conditions of merit) for honorary degrees.

#### **F. A New Graduate School as an Instrument of “the Faculty” Concerning Honorary Degrees 1912-1924**

In 1909, the Committee on Degrees and Diplomas (a standing committee of “the Faculty”) recommended to the Faculty that there be established a “Graduate School.” A year and a half later, the Board of Trustees reorganized the University, and specified that a standing committee of “the Faculty” would be a “Graduate Study and Honorary Degree Committee,” and the following month (May 1911) that committee submitted to “the Faculty” recommendations for “honorary degrees,” which the Faculty approved and forwarded to the Board, which rendered final approval. (Because the committee was arranged as a part of the governance apparatus of “the Faculty,” it was satisfactory to “the Faculty” that their authority under state law to “originate” recommendations to the Board was preserved). The Faculty’s “Graduate Study and Honorary Degree Committee” also urged that a Graduate School be established, and the following year (June 1912), Professor Mackenzie presented that proposal to the administrative Council (of deans) seeking, and obtaining, its endorsement. The proposal was submitted to the Board of Trustees, which approved it, establishing the Graduate School, with Professor Mackenzie as Dean. The Faculty’s “Graduate Study and Honorary Degree Committee” in November 1912 therefore organizationally became the new “executive committee” of the new Graduate School.

The following year, 1913, the official “List of Standing Committees of the Faculty” included “Graduate School” as one of the standing committees of “the Faculty,” with Mackenzie and four other professors listed as members of the committee ... that is, although Mackenzie held the title of “dean” of the Graduate School, this standing committee charged to administratively run the “Graduate School” was an instrument, a committee, of “the Faculty.” (Hence, the statutory of the prerogative of “the Faculty,” through its standing committee, to originate recommendations on Honorary Degrees remained preserved). Some who were members of “the faculty of the university,” i.e., “the Faculty,” were designated members of the Graduate School, although the term “Graduate Faculty” (as used today) was not applied to that faculty body of the Graduate School at that time.

“The Faculty” continued to use as an advisory source of nominees for Honorary Degrees the former “Graduate Student and Honorary Degree Committee” that had become the “executive committee” of the Graduate School. During the period from 1912 to 1924, the Minutes of the Faculty show “the graduate school committee” submitting recommendations to the Faculty on nominees for Honorary Degrees. In fact, when the Board of Trustees had previously directed the Board’s Executive Committee to act upon the recommendation that a Graduate School be established, the full Board had been asked by the Council (of deans) to approve that the policy that

*“All recommendations for the conferring of post-graduate and honorary degrees and honors shall be made **by the Graduate School to the Board** of Trustees through the President,”*

which, if read to mean that “the Faculty” body was by-passed, would have contradicted the state law under which recommendations to the Board concerning honorary degrees shall be from **“the faculty of the institution.”** President Barker, and the Board of Trustees, recognized that it was the body “the Faculty,” and not the appointed executive committee of the Graduate School, that constituted “the faculty of the university” for the purposes the state law and honorary degrees. Indeed, the Board’s minutes five years later for the 1916 conferral of honorary degrees at the University’s Golden Jubilee celebration expressly record compliance with the state law:

*“President H. S. Barker stated that the object of the meeting was, first, to pass on the recommendation of honorary degrees **by the Faculty**, and endorsed by the Executive Board [Executive Committee], to be conferred on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee exercises of the University, so that there would be no question raised as to the **legality** of the act.”*

The Minutes of the Faculty show the Faculty continued to exercise its role in development of policy of the conditions of merit and circumstance for, and the titles for, honorary degrees, e.g.,

*“Professor Miller ... gave expression to his views upon the matter of honorary degrees, to the effect that it was not in good taste and not in accord with current practice among the great universities of this or other countries, for such an institution to award honorary degrees to members of its **own staff** or **official representatives**, as in the list now proposed. He thought furthermore, that the greatest care should be used to award such degrees only by painstaking investigation and careful discrimination, and that hereafter, names proposed for such degrees should be presented to the faculty much earlier in the session.” (1913)*

*“President Barker next reported that he had received a letter in which complaint had been made that degrees of honor had been conferred by the University on some **unworthy people**, not in keeping with the dignity of the institution. He thought that it might be well to be more particular in the future” (1914)*

*“On account of **the rule** that no such degree is conferred in absentia, Mr. Allen having been sick at that time, the degree was not conferred.” (1916)*

In fact, once the United States entered the first World War, there was an explicit example in which the Board wanted to confer ‘regular’ degrees to students who joined the army without completing their course of study. However, “the Faculty,” (not the Graduate School), having, as “the Faculty,” the statutory final disapproval authority, insisted and obtained that the award to such students would instead be a unique honorary degree with its own unique conditions of merit (and its own conditions of circumstance, i.e., the students who had joined the army did not have to be present at Commencement to receive the unique Honorary Degree):

#### **April 1917 Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees:**

*“THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Executive Committee of the University of Kentucky as follows:*

*1. If any student be a member of the Senior Class of the University and he enlist for service in the Army or Navy of the United States, he shall be graduated at the regular commencement in June and receive his degree and diploma without any further examination.”*

#### **Senate Rules published 1918:**

*“1. The Senate is authorized to confer an **honorary degree, Honoris Causa**, upon students who have entered the army or navy service of the United States at the end of their junior year or during their senior year. This degree differs from the regular bachelor degree in that it is a **recognition of services to our country in time of need.**”*

In summary, note again here that the source for all of the Faculty’s above flexing of authority concerning honorary degrees was derived directly to “the faculty of the university” from the state law, and not by delegation to the Faculty by the Board or by the President.

### **G. Board Delegates to University Senate Authority Over Conditions for Honors and Honorary Degrees**

Through its 1918 Governing Regulations, the Board of Trustees renamed “the Faculty” as “*the University Senate*,” and specified the Senate as “*the legislative body*” of the University. The Board also expressly delegated to the University Senate the authority of “*jurisdiction*” over “*Requirements for degrees*” and over “*Prizes, **honors and degrees***,” but retained the requirement that the Senate forward to the Board recommendations for the award of honorary degrees. A historical tracking of the subsequent fate of this language of delegation in the Governing Regulations shows the delegation became incorporated into the 1960 section of GR IV on the University Senate, that referred to Senate’s authority over “*the broad academic polices*” of the University. However, subsequent to 1960, in its 1970 revision to the Governing Regulations, the Board (1) amended that section of GR IV to expressly state that the University Senate did not make final determination of **conditions** for **Honorary Degrees** (i.e., its authority from 1918 to do so was taken back by the Board) and (2) added new language in a new section GR II.A.6, which by incorporating (for the first time) KRS 164.240 verbatim, thereby placed the Board back again into the position of final determination of conditions for the award of Honorary Degrees, and placed “the faculty of the university” back into the recommending role to the Board on those **conditions** for Honorary Degrees.

### **H. The Graduate Faculty Matures into Body Safeguarding the Faculty’s Role in Honorary Degrees: 1925-42**

Meanwhile, against the backdrop of the 1918 regulations prescribing the controlling role of the University Senate over Honorary Degree recommendations to the Board, in January 1924 the Board approved for the President to reorganize the Graduate School. Under the 1912 organization, the administrative decision-making entity was the “committee” of the Senate, the dean of the school being more akin to a chair of the committee. Upon the Board’s delegation in 1924, the President empowered the dean with both the 1918-administrative powers of a college dean and the 1918-decisional powers of a college faculty concerning curricula(!). The faculty who were under the that dean for graduate programmatic purposes did not in parallel have the powers of a college faculty body. Instead, the full Graduate School faculty body became termed as a “*Graduate School Committee*.” The Senate Minutes after 1925 show it receiving recommendations on Honorary Degrees from “*the Graduate School committee*” that was not a small committee, but rather the larger body that today we would call “the Graduate Faculty.”

In April 1931, the University Senate approved the proposal from “*the Graduate School Committee*” that “***the University Senate create a Graduate Council to take the place of the present Graduate Committee***” and prescribed “*that members of the council shall be ... each member of the University Senate [who] teaches a course number 200 or above.*” That is, what we would call “the Graduate Faculty” today was created (with the name “Graduate Council”) in 1931 by the University Senate to be a sub-part of the University Senate membership (at that time, all faculty of the university at or above assistant professor were Senate members). This body held its first organizational meeting in April 1931, and its first substantive meeting (34 members present) in November 1931, at which presiding officer Dean Funkhouser opened with the negative admonition that “*the Graduate Council might concern itself with discussion of really important problems rather than trivial questions of rules and regulations*” (this attitude by Funkhouser would in several years reap what it had just started sowing). Four months later, consequent to its fourth meeting (in March 1932), Dean Funkhouser wrote to the Graduate Council members “*In accordance with the action taken by the Graduate Council at its [March] meeting ... the following committees have been appointed: Committee on Awards. Committee on Honorary Degrees.*” Hence, the Graduate Council(Faculty), created by the University Senate (that itself contained all professorial faculty of the university) and being membered from a sub-part of the University Senate membership, had acted to cause appointments to the reorganized form of the Honorary Degree Committee. In fact, the Graduate Council whose action caused the appointments to the Honorary Degree Committee was considered so integral to the University Senate that the 1932 Minutes of the Senate record the Honorary Degree nominations as having come directly to the Senate from the Honorary Degree Committee. By 1935, Dean Funkhouser was appointing only deans as the members of the Honorary Degree, and the year after that with the majority as deans (Registrar Ezra Gillis wrote to the committee Chair in 1936 “*It is my opinion that on the whole the University has lost rather than gained by the granting of honorary degrees, and that it would be better if the University would discontinue the practice*).

More reorganization was in store, beginning with a decision by the Graduate Council that beginning in fall 1935, each college faculty’s eligible membership would elect from itself 40% of itself to Graduate Council membership; unless the eligible college faculty voted to delegate to the college dean the appointment of that number. The following January (1936), a committee of the Graduate Council proposed that the name “Graduate Council” be changed to “the Graduate Faculty;” that the Graduate Faculty possess the same powers as a college faculty; and that its members be annually appointed by the President to ensure the “legal status” of the Graduate Faculty body. The Graduate Faculty body (and its organic appendage, the Honorary Degree Committee), though still advisory to the Senate and subject to Senate Rules, were no longer committees of the Senate apparatus *per se* (whose membership could be defined by the Senate); rather, the Graduate Faculty’s membership was defined by the appointments to it made by the President, in the sense that the President would make faculty appointments to the faculties of colleges.

By 1938, with the end of the McVey Presidency in sight, with the University faculty becoming bitterly roiled over what it considered gross transgression of faculty academic freedom by the President and the Engineering Dean Graham, and with Dean Funkhouser continuing to appoint mostly deans to the Honorary Degree Committee, the control over honorary degrees was contested again. It began at the March 1938 meeting of the Graduate Faculty:

*“called in special session to hear the report of the Committee on Honorary Degrees. The ... names were recommended by the chairman, Dean Boyd (Arts & Sciences) ... After a discussion a substitute motion that the names be considered separately prevailed. A motion to recommend [Associate Justice] Stanley Reed [for LL.D.] ... was approved and a motion to recommend Lt. Governor Keen Johnson [for LL.D.] was seconded and a general discussion followed, after which it seemed advisable **to reconsider** the recommendation of Stanley Reed for the honorary degree. A motion prevailed to reconsider the first motion. After some discussion **a motion to table the recommendation of the Committee was approved.**”*

No nominees were recommended to the Board of Trustees in 1938, and so no Honorary Degrees were awarded. Dean Funkhouser, licking his wounds on not being able to deliver to the Board the Graduate Faculty’s approval of any of the proposed Honorary Degrees, then at the next meeting (May 1938) and again at the (Dec. 1938) meeting

*“asked the faculty to determine whether he should appoint a Committee on Honorary Degrees. He stated that it was useless to appoint a committee if the faculty was of the opinion that no honorary degrees be granted and referred to the experience of the committee last year.*

This clever but transparent move by Dean Funkhouser did not actually yield to the Graduate Faculty the appointment of the members of the committee, and was intended to cause the Graduate Faculty to commit *a priori* to approving recommendations for Honorary Degrees.

*“In answer to a question from the floor it was made clear, however, that **the Faculty was under no obligation to support a particular person** who was recommended for a degree.”*

The Graduate Faculty, having demonstrated that it cannot be forced by the (its) Honorary Degree Committee to recommend to the University Senate Honorary Degree nominees that the Graduate Faculty does not support, then demonstrated the converse. At its Feb. 1942 meeting, the Graduate Faculty, **added de novo two new names** to the list of Honorary Degree nominees that had been submitted by the Honorary Degree Committee. Hence, the Graduate Faculty, a faculty body subordinate and advisory to the University Senate concerning Honorary Degrees nominees, itself cannot be forced to adopt (for submission to the University Senate) the nominees of the advisory Honorary Degree committee, nor is it limited by the (its) Honorary Degree Committee from being able to submit its own nominees to the University Senate.

### **I. Subordination of Graduate Faculty to University Faculty in Honorary Degrees – Clarified 1947-55**

The Board of Trustees attempted in its revised 1947 Governing Regulations to reflect the above principle that the Graduate Faculty is not controlled by the (its) advisory Honorary Degree Committee. The Board specified that recommendations on Honorary Degrees “originate” with the Graduate Faculty (i.e., not “originate with the Honorary Degree Committee”). But taken literally, that new regulation would also make the University Senate’s actions obligatorily contingent upon the positive recommendation of the Graduate Faculty (see above for 1911 similar situation). However, ever mindful to protect its own statutory posture, the University Faculty (= Senate) quickly noted that this provision violated the prerogative of “the faculty of the university” under state law, where the University Faculty (= Senate) (for “the faculty of the university”) is unfettered under that law in its development of recommendations to the Board for Honorary Degrees. Hence, the Graduate Faculty’s recommendations continued to be processed through the University Faculty (= Senate), and that particular provision was removed in the next revision of the Governing Regulations (1955). In 1951, the University Faculty (= Senate), by way of its own vote (not imposed by the Board), did opt to utilize the Graduate Faculty as the origination of Honorary Degree recommendations. The University Senate chose this option by approving a proposed new Graduate Faculty Rule stating that recommendations on Honorary Degrees originate with the Graduate Faculty (this self-imposed procedural specification by the University Senate continued until 1975, see below). New Graduate School Dean H. E. Spivey (1952) also did much to facilitate the governance ambiance that recommendations on Honorary Degrees originate with the “the faculty,” by his reinstating the appointment of a predominance of **full-time faculty** to the Honorary Degree Committee. As President Dickey wrote in 1957 “*Our Committee on Honorary Degrees, composed of **faculty** members representing various disciplines...*”

### **J. The Faculty Again Exerts Its Statutory Authority to Originate Recommendations for Honorary Degrees**

By the mid-1950’s, the joint cooperation of the University President, University Faculty (= Senate) and Dean of the Graduate School (in appointing the members to the Honorary Degree Committee) had found a working governance equilibrium. Unfortunately, due to the character of the Governor (= the Chairman of the Board) that equilibrium became perturbed again in the late 1950’s, and prompted the University Faculty to again flex its statutory posture concerning Honorary Degrees. Just as Richard Stoll had done in 1910 (above), Governor Chandler sought to direct that a particular individual be awarded an Honorary Degree. In April 1958, Governor Chandler committed to an out-of-state individual who was advocating a particular person “*I will bring this matter to the attention of the University of Kentucky Board of Trustees so that a degree of Doctor of Humanities for him may be considered. I ... assure you that the Board of Trustees will give your suggestion consideration.*” The problem, as with Stoll in 1910, is that neither the Board as a whole, nor the Board Chairman, has the authority under state law to commit that the Board will take action on its own initiative on the award of an Honorary Degree ... it can only act upon those nominees submitted by “the faculty of the university.” Chandler’s “assurance” immediately raised the ire of the faculty Honorary Degree Committee, necessitating President Dickey to meet with the Chair of the committee (William Garrigus, Animal Sciences) and Dean Spivey, in a quick Saturday morning conference, that led to an emergency meeting of the Honorary Degree Committee. The end result was that this individual, committed to by Governor Chandler, was not recommended to the Board, and therefore did not receive an Honorary Degree.

Finally, it seems, Governor Chandler came to understand the faculty's controlling role on what names reach the Board of Trustees as recommendations for Honorary Degrees. When the following year (1959) Chandler had yet another 'favorite' he wanted considered for an Honorary Degree, he provided the name to President Dickey with the request that Dickey "*tak[e] whatever action you deem proper.*" President Dickey wrote back to Chandler "*I shall be glad to refer [the individual] ... Of course, you are familiar with the fact that **the faculty thinks rather independently** on some of these things and there is no guarantee that [name] would be finally approved.*" As President Dickey further wrote to another individual in 1962 explaining that in "*[t]he selection of recipients for Honorary Degrees ... [i]n actuality, **no individual, such** as the Dean of the Graduate School, or **the President, has any major voice in the selection.***"

#### **K. The Pendulum Continues to Swing, Dependent Upon the University President's Agenda: 1960's- 1970's**

Under the new Graduate School Dean A.D. Kirwan (1960) and new President John Oswald (1963) the process of development of Honorary Degree recommendations continued as a faculty-originated process. The appointments to the Honorary Degree Committee continued to be predominantly **full-time faculty** (a 6:2 ratio of full-time faculty to ex officio administrative members). President Oswald, who started the tradition of publishing the annual memorandum on committee assignments, expressly and accurately listed the committee as the academic "Honorary Degree Committee **of the Graduate Faculty**" to clearly designate that it is not an "administrative" committee, such as the parking ticket committee. The marked increase in award of honorary degrees to highly distinguished University faculty through 1968, during the term of President Oswald (who was charged by the Board to spur the University's research, much as President Todd was in 2001), reflects Oswald's effort to identify mechanisms to encourage University faculty to aspire to high creative achievement.

Upon his appointment in 1969, President Singletary began a sustained effort across several decades by his successors, to acquire functional control over the Honorary Degree Committee, without actually declaring his intent to steal the committee from the faculty. In 1972, he appointed to the committee the Vice President for Public Relations (no such person had ever been appointed to the committee previously), but the ratio of full-time faculty committee members to other members was still 6:3. However, steadily across the next three decades, Singletary and the successive Presidents changed this ratio to reduce full-time faculty to a lesser and lesser proportion. By 1978, the ratio was 7:5. In 1981 Singletary surreptitiously moved the committee from the "academic" committees section of the annual committee memo to the "administrative committees" section and added a trustee, making the ratio 6:6. Having effected by that sleight of hand the addition of a trustee, the next year Singletary moved the committee back to the "academic" committees section of the annual memo. In 1983, the ratio was made 6:7 by the addition of yet another full-time administrator. In 1989, President Roselle made the ratio 6:8. President Wethington's approach was not to further increase the number of full-time administrators, but instead to steadily reduce the number of full-time faculty – in just his first (interim) year as President the ratio fell to 4:8. Finally, in 2005 under President Todd, the ratio was reduced to its proportion of full-time faculty to an all-time low of 3:8.

During these decades, in the face of the Presidents' manipulation of the faculty ratio on the Honorary Degree Committee, the University Senate and faculty members of the Honorary Degree Committee still managed to assert the faculty's posture. In fall 1975, the Graduate Faculty Rule, optionally approved by the University Senate in 1952, by which "the faculty of the university" (= Senate) agreed to utilize the Graduate Faculty to "originate" recommendations on Honorary Degrees, was removed from the Graduate Faculty Rules, which thereby released the University Senate from its self-imposed procedure of depending on the Graduate Faculty (instead of itself) to originate recommendations for Honorary Degrees. Of course, that change also clarified (again) that the University Senate was not obligatorily dependent upon the Honorary Degree Committee to supply the candidate recommendations. Also, during this period, despite the attempts of President Singletary to exert substantive influence, if not control, over the Honorary Degree Committee, he conspicuously did not ever (and no subsequent President did ever) list the Honorary Degree Committee as an "administrative committee" in the section III of the Administrative Regulations that lists the charges to Presidentially-controlled administrative committees. In 1989, 1990, and 1991 the remaining (minority) of full-time faculty on the Honorary Degree Committee exerted sufficient influence to prevent the committee from forwarding to the Graduate Faculty the name of then-Governor Wallace Wilkinson (he became the first sitting Governor in fifty years not to receive a UK Honorary Degree, and no sitting UK Governor has since received an Honorary Degree).

## L. Procedures for Operation of the Honorary Degree Committee – Our Present State

The current (2005) Board of Trustees appears determined that the long-established role and authority of "the faculty of the university" in the Honorary Degree process be realized. At its June 2005 meeting, the Board of Trustees adopted new Governing Regulations (GR IV.A.1) expressly acknowledging that, owing to the Faculty Senators being elected by and from "the faculty of the university," the elected **Faculty Senators** are the "representatives" of that larger faculty body. Hence, these new Board regulations also prescribe that when the University Senate determines the persons to be recommended to the Board for Honorary Degrees, it is to be only the elected Faculty Senators who vote (not student senators nor ex officio administration).

If there is a current intent that the only potential nominees to be considered by the Graduate Faculty and then University Senate are those offered by the Honorary Degree Committee, then in essence "the faculty of the university" has lost control of its own statutory prerogative over who will be recommended to the Board of Trustees, *unless the Honorary Degree Committee functions as the "faculty" committee for which it was established*. (There may be a different current intent, in which the Graduate Faculty and University Senate opt on their own initiative to generate nominees independent of the committee).

## M. Conditions of Merit for Honorary Degrees – How We Arrived to the Current Situation

As summarized in section G above, the Board of Trustees had appeared in 1918 to delegate to the University Senate authority over degrees and honors, except that the award of an Honorary Degree must be finally approved by the Board ... hence, the Board in 1918 delegated to the Senate the final authority to determine the statutory "conditions" for the awards of degrees with honors to graduating students, and conditions for the award of Honorary degrees. Hence, the Senate had never submitted to the Board, for its approval, a description of the conditions of either merit or circumstance for the award of an Honorary Degree. At a January 1963 meeting of the Graduate Faculty, an inquiry from the floor prompted Graduate Dean A. B. Kirwan to explain into the minutes the conditions of merit that had been developed in practice up to that time for the recommendation of Honorary Degrees to the University Senate.

Then, in 1978, the Graduate Faculty requested to the Dean of the Graduate School, Wimberly Royster, that the criteria be reexamined. The Dean appointed a "Review Committee," which in 1979 revised the conditions, ("criteria") to remove the singular emphasis on the connection of the recipient to the state of Kentucky and/or the University of Kentucky, that were conditions described in the 1963 Graduate Faculty minutes. President Singletary commented that this change in conditions of merit constituted a significant change in philosophy. (The new criteria did still allow a sitting Governor to be considered as a valid recipient). There is no record in the minutes of the University Senate or the Board of Trustees that the 1979 revised criteria were ever submitted to the University Senate for approval. In addition, as described in section G above, the Board in its Governing Regulations of 1970 expressly removed from the University Senate the 1918 delegation to make final determination of the conditions for **Honorary Degrees** (but did not withdraw the delegation to determine the conditions for '**degrees with honors**,' e.g., conditions for Magna Cum Laude). There is no record in the Minutes of the Board of Trustees that the 1979 criteria ('conditions of merit') were submitted by the University Senate to the Board for final approval.

Next, in 1989, and then again in 1990, the Honorary Degree Committee did not recommend sitting Governor Wallace Wilkinson for an Honorary Degree. Dean of the Graduate School Dan Reedy appointed a committee to reexamine the conditions of merit for an Honorary Degree. The committee report stated that a sitting Kentucky government official ought not be eligible to receive an Honorary Degree. The committee continued for another year to examine what other officials ought not be eligible. Unfortunately, the work product of that committee has not been archivally located in either the records of the Graduate School Office or the University Archives. However, the criteria for Honorary Degrees currently web posted on the Graduate School web site are changed from those of 1979, and therefore may be the work product of the 1990/1991 committee. But, there is no record in the Minutes of the University Senate or the Board of Trustees that those criteria currently posted on the Graduate School web site (<http://www.rgs.uky.edu/gs/HonoraryDegrees.html>) were ever approved by the University Senate, were ever recommended by the University Senate to the Board, or ever approved by the Board.

## Precedents in the History of University of Kentucky Honorary Degrees

### 1. Names of Honorary Degrees Awarded:

<u>Name</u>	<u>First Awarded</u>	<u>Most Recently Awarded</u>
Doctor of Arts	1996	2002
Doctor of Laws	1886	1997
Doctor of Science	1906	2005
Doctor of Engineering	1907	2002
Doctor of Humanities	1993	2002
Doctor of Letters	2003	2004
Doctor of Literature	1916	1975
Doctor of Mechanical Engineering	1914	1914
Master of Arts (or A.M.)	1888	1912
Master of Science	1906	1906
Honoris Causa	1917-8	

### 2. Board of Trustees Does Not Approve Nominee Officially Recommended by University Faculty/Senate

1917 Albert Rogers Crandall (recommended for Doctor of Science)  
1957 Harry W. Schacter

### 3. Graduate Faculty On Its Own Initiative Adds Name to List Submitted by Honorary Degree Committee

1942 Judge Samuel M. Wilson (for LL.D.)  
Rogers Clark Ballard Thruston (for LL. D)

### 4. Graduate Faculty Disapproves of Names Submitted by Honorary Degree Committee (HDC)

1938 HDC Submitted three names; none were approved for recommendation to University Senate

### 5. Conditions of merit or circumstance for the award of Honorary Degrees

1908: Minutes of the Board of Trustees, a recommendation from “the Faculty”

*“...in accordance with the practice of the most advanced universities in this country; that [academic] degrees should be given only in recognition of work accomplished under the direct supervision of the University faculty, except in the case of those which are customarily bestowed as honorary degrees in recognition of distinguished public services or scholarship.”*

1952: Graduate Faculty Rules, as approved by the “University Faculty” and “Board of Trustees”

*“Honorary degrees are normally conferred at the June commencement, but may be conferred at other times with the approval of the Graduate Faculty. Recipients must be present to receive honorary degrees.”*

1959: Memo from Graduate School Dean Herman Spivey to Department Heads:

*“The [Honorary Degree] Committee, in harmony with Graduate Faculty sentiment, would like to select only a few each year (perhaps not over 2 to 4) and would like these to have achieved outstanding distinction – not merely unusual success. They should, too, have had some connection with the state at some time so that it would seem more appropriate for the University of Kentucky to confer on them an honorary degree than it would for Wisconsin to do so, or California, or North Carolina, or some other University .*

1963: As articulated by Graduate School Dean A. D. Kirwan into the 1963 Minutes of the Graduate Faculty:

*“Dean Kirwan stated that while there were no formal rules for the selection of candidates and each committee suggested its own criteria, certain general principles were followed. The candidate should have some connection with Kentucky and have shown some interest in the University. The candidate should be more than a successful man, and should have made a contribution to society. He should be a distinguished individual.”*

## AS CURRENTLY POSTED AT THE GRADUATE SCHOOL WEB SITE 2005

<http://www.rgs.uky.edu/gs/HonoraryDegrees.html>

[Note: Black Font below is the language of the 1979 "Honorary Degree Committee's Recommended Criteria"; Blue Font is language not found in the 1979 document]

"An honorary degree is granted for the purpose of honoring those who exemplify the ideals of the University through their significant achievements and contributions to society.

"The Committee on Honorary Degrees solicits nominations for degrees to be awarded at May Commencement exercises. Nominations and supporting information (please include a CV or resume of accomplishments of nominees, if possible) should be sent to the Graduate School by *September 15* prior to the May award. If desired, nominations and supporting materials may be submitted anonymously. The Committee will take into account the criteria, principles, and guidelines approved by the Graduate Faculty in the selection of honorees, as indicated below:

### "Criteria:

"Honorary degrees may be conferred upon those who have significantly benefited humanity and society by:

1. Outstanding intellectual achievements,
2. Outstanding creative accomplishments, or
3. Outstanding leadership in education, business, public service, or other appropriate sectors of society.

### "Principles and Guidelines:

1. The honorary degree shall be awarded to recognize only the exceptional accomplishments as outlined in the above criteria. The nominee's special achievement or contribution to society shall be the fundamental consideration and shall be evaluated without particular regard to the nominee's attainment of influential position or financial status.
2. The nominee shall have gained distinction worthy of recognition extending well beyond his/her own field of endeavor and geographical area of activity.
3. Although it is recognized that it is desirable for the nominee to have a University of Kentucky or a Kentucky tie, such a connection shall not be a requirement.
4. As long as the nominee clearly meets the criteria, his/her selection shall not be affected by the number of previous similar honors received.
5. Former faculty and staff of the University of Kentucky shall meet the same criteria as other honorees.
6. Elected or appointed officials of the Commonwealth of Kentucky shall not be eligible as honorary degree candidates during their terms of office.
7. Except on special occasions or in unusual circumstances, the number of honorary degrees awarded at any given ceremony shall be limited to three.
8. The honoree must be present to receive the honorary degree.
9. The honorary degree shall be conferred at the regular university graduation ceremony or at a special assembly or convocation. "