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Office of the President
October 26, 2013

Members, Board of Trustees:

HONORARY DEGREE RECIPIENTS

Recommendation: that the Board of Trustees approve awarding an Honorary Doctor of Engineering to Wilbert W. James, Jr., and a Honorary Doctor of Letters to Michael T. Nietzel as approved and recommended by the University Faculty.

Background: Pursuant to the Conditions of Merit for Honorary Degrees, the University Joint Committee on Honorary Degrees has recommended to the elected Faculty Senators that the specified honorary degree be awarded to Wilbert W. James, Jr., and Michael T. Nietzel. The elected Faculty Senators have approved the recommendation.

Biographical sketches of the recipients are attached.

Action taken: Approved Disapproved Other _____

Wilbert W. (Wil) James, Jr.

Wilbert W. (Wil) James, Jr., is president of Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Kentucky (TMMK), serving in that role from 2010 to the present. He leads the largest automotive manufacturing plant in the United States and by his example, ensures that TMMK continues to be an outstanding corporate and community citizen, in addition to providing well-paying jobs for thousands of Kentuckians.

A native of Norfolk, Virginia, James earned his Bachelor of Science degree in mechanical engineering technology from Old Dominion University.

Prior to coming to TMMK, he held positions of production engineer, maintenance engineer, and project engineer at Olin Corporation.

In 1987, James joined TMMK and spent the next 19 years handling a variety of assignments, with numerous promotions along the way as he continued to take on ever-increasing responsibilities. James served as general manager of assembly, overseeing engineering, maintenance, production and internal parts conveyance for Kentucky's two assembly lines, along with the plastics organization. He also held the position of general manager of production administration, with responsibilities that included coordination of production support, facilities, environmental, planning and project management.

In January 2003, James was named as TMMK's vice president of manufacturing, guiding all vehicle manufacturing operations as well as production control.

Eager to have James spread his talents and expertise to other key facilities in their North American operations, Toyota's corporate leadership selected him to become senior vice president of operations for TABC, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Toyota Motor Engineering and Manufacturing located in Long Beach, California, in January 2006. One year later he was promoted to president. In 2008, James was named as senior vice president for manufacturing and quality at Toyota's Evansville, Indiana facility.

Two years later, James was asked to come back home to his adopted home of Kentucky to assume the presidency of TMMK. He is the first African-American president of the the plant and recently was named as one of the Top 100 Most Influential Blacks in Corporate America.

James' civic and community involvement includes the following:

- Chair of the Needs Committee for Lexington's Arena Task Force
- Board of Directors, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce
- Board of Affiliates for the National Society of Black Engineers

- Kentucky Humanities Council
- The Partnership for Youth Organizations
- Board of Regents, Kentucky State University
- Board of the Urban League of Louisville
- Board of the Bluegrass Economic Advancement Movement
- The Executive Leadership Conference
- Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity

For all of his accomplishments and record of service, Wilbert W. (Wil) James, Jr. is recommended for an Honorary Doctorate of Engineering from the University of Kentucky.

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Michael T. Nietzel

Michael T. Nietzel devoted 32 years of his life to the University of Kentucky as a teacher, researcher, department chair and campus administrator. He served as the university's first provost, following a major administrative reorganization in 2001. He also served as president of Missouri State University from 2005 to 2010, prior to assuming his current position as senior advisor to the Office of the Missouri Governor.

Nietzel earned his bachelor's degree in Psychology at Wheaton College, located near Chicago, Illinois. He pursued graduate studies at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign, attaining a master's degree in clinical psychology, and then completing his Ph.D. in clinical psychology with a minor in community psychology.

In 1973, Nietzel joined the UK faculty, beginning what would become a long and distinguished career in Lexington. In addition to connecting with his undergraduate students in the classroom, Nietzel was a prolific researcher and mentor to numerous graduate students, as well as serving as chair of the psychology department over the course of his 28 years as a member of the faculty.

With a litany of published research in refereed journals, Nietzel also developed a national and international reputation in forensic psychology, often being called upon as an expert witness in a wide range of court cases.

In 1997, he demonstrated his love for UK and commitment to furthering its excellence by donating financial resources to help endow the M.E. and V.D. Nietzel Visiting Distinguished Faculty Award, given to 68 programs over the past 16 years.

During his four years as UK provost, Nietzel was a major implementer of the Top 20 Research Plan and the Research Challenge Trust Fund. In addition, he fostered the establishment of the UK Center for Research on Violence against Women, the UK Center on Trauma and Children, and played important roles in the President's Commissions on Women and on Diversity.

Nietzel accepted a new challenge in 2005 when he was chosen to lead Southwest Missouri State University through a period of transition and growth as it became known officially as Missouri State University. Under Nietzel's leadership, Missouri State made a number of improvements, strengthening its faculty together with its academic and research profile, increasing its fundraising, building a number of new facilities on campus, improving student access and quality, and positively impacting relations with alumni, the community and state government.

When Nietzel announced he was stepping down, the chair of the Missouri State Board of Governors was quoted as saying, "The University will miss his leadership. Dr. Nietzel has great ideas and knows how to sell them. He has a combination of talent and skills that is hard to find."

As noted earlier, since leaving the presidency, Nietzel has continued to serve the citizens of the state at a high level, as senior advisor to the Office of the Missouri Governor.

For all his accomplishments, dedication and service, Michael T. Nietzel is recommended for an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from the University of Kentucky.

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