

Brothers, Sheila C

From: Greissman, Richard
Sent: Monday, May 24, 2010 4:09 PM
To: Randall, David C; Swanson, Hollie
Cc: Brothers, Sheila C; Deaton, Marcy
Subject: Senate Council Retreat - Honorary Degree discussion
Attachments: Conferral of Honorary Degrees - Rules of the University Senate (University of Kentucky).docx; Honorary Degree policies (representative institutions).docx

Dear Dave and Hollie,

Thanks again for the thirty minutes you've allotted at Thursday's retreat for my presentation and discussion on honorary degrees. There are two distinct but related issues that I'd like to address.

(1) The University of Kentucky currently confers up to 3 honorary degrees at the May commencement. The University Senate recently approved a change to the academic calendar that establishes a December (Winter) commencement, as a three-year pilot initiative. My first set of questions: Shall we offer some number of honorary degrees at December commencement, beginning with the December 2011 commencement? If so, should we distribute the 3 honorary degree awards over the two annual ceremonies or increase the number of degrees conferred annually, say from 3 to 5 honorary degrees?

(2) Could we codify in the Rules of the University Senate (Section 5.4.2.3) a provision for an "off cycle" award of honorary degrees, conferred during a University academic convocation at a time of year other than May or December? The timing of off-cycle events would facilitate extended visits of persons with international reputations at a time of semester when rich faculty and students interactions with those honorary degree recipients were more likely to occur than immediately prior to May or December commencement. The conferrals would follow the provisions cited in RUS 5.4.2.3, including the role of the Joint University Committee on Honorary Degrees in the deliberation process, but allow for conferral at times other than those currently provided (May) or recently approved on a trial basis (May and December). One might imagine a revision that stipulated the award of no more than five honorary degrees per academic year, inclusive of December, May and any "off-cycle" conferrals in a given year.

At Hollie's behest, I reviewed our benchmarks for current practices. The practices among the five institutions reported in the attached document are representative of a range of policies, but comparable to what I have suggested above. In anticipation of Thursday's discussion, it may be helpful to circulate among the Senate Council membership the two documents attached to this email message.

I look forward to Thursday's discussion.

My best,
Richard