

## HONORARY DEGREE POLICY

Westfield State University, through the approval process outlined below and culminating with a vote of the WSU Board of Trustees, confers honorary degrees to individuals who have demonstrated extraordinary achievements in such areas as scholarship, research, artistic creation, social activism, human rights, innovation beneficial to society, and humanitarian outreach.

The recipients of an honorary degree will be forever associated with the Institution. Therefore, honorary degree recipients should be individuals who reflect the ideals associated with Westfield State (e.g., academic freedom, excellence, service, integrity) and whose lives inspire others and exemplifies Westfield State's aspirations for its graduates. Degree recipients enhance the reputation and visibility of the institution. The degree is typically awarded recognizing significant career and/or lifetime achievement. An honorary degree is not equivalent to or a replacement for an earned degree.

Qualified candidates are considered regardless of race, gender, creed, age, sexual orientation, or national origin.

### PROCESS

There are four steps in the process:

1. **Nomination.** Anyone may make a nomination to the Honorary Degree Committee. The nomination should include a letter or statement as to why the person should be nominated, reference the appropriate criteria on the nomination form (available on the institution website and represented in Appendix A), and provide additional support documentation. Support documentation should include as many of the following as possible:
  - a. A description and explanation of the nominee's accomplishments;
  - b. An explanation of how the accomplishments reflect the goals and mission of Westfield State University;
  - c. A curriculum vita, resume, or significant biographical information.

In considering nominees, the committee shall consider the information contained in the nomination and provided documentation, and may consider other pertinent information. In no instance may the committee members disclose the names of individuals nominated or recommended for honorary degrees. All committee members shall maintain the strict confidentiality of the nomination process. Letters in support of the nomination **shall not** be

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solicited. In no instance shall the individual nominated for an honorary degree be notified of his or her nomination by anyone other than the President of Westfield State University or her/his designee.

Nominations are submitted to the Honorary Degree Committee composed of nine members:

- Three faculty, designated by MSCA
- Three professional staff, designated by APA
- One senior administrator, designated by the President
- One classified staff, designated by AFSCME
- The class president of the senior class, or designee

2. **Candidacy.** A nominee may become a recommended candidate only by action of the Honorary Degree Committee\*. It is the Committee's responsibility to review the submitted biographical material of each nominee for an honorary degree, and to recommend nominees to the President as candidates for honorary degrees. The committee assigns a high priority to recognition of individuals representing diverse backgrounds and life experiences. A simple majority vote by the committee will determine its recommendation for each nominee.

\*In the event that the Honorary Degree Committee cannot review a nominee in a timely manner (e.g., late acquisition of a commencement speaker), the President may recommend candidacy to the Board of Trustees with concurrent notification and justification to the Honorary Degree Committee. The *Board* may act in executive session.

3. **Presidential Selection.** The President selects from among the candidates recommended by the Honorary Degree Committee those persons who will be awarded honorary degrees. The President may support, alter, or reject the list of names. The President will notify the Honorary Degree Committee in the event that s/he alters or rejects the list of proposed candidates. Nominees recommended and not selected to receive an honorary degree may remain in the approved category for a period of five (5) years from the date of candidacy, however the Honorary Degree Committee may recommend to the President the removal of a candidate from the candidate list. While the President may select any person to be commencement speaker, the selected speaker must be approved by the Board of Trustees to receive an honorary degree.
4. **Board Approval.** The Board of Trustees approves the awarding of degrees to those who are selected by the President.

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## Degrees Conferred

The degrees awarded shall be called:

Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts, honoris causa; or  
Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa; or  
Honorary Doctor of Humanities, honoris causa; or  
Honorary Doctor of Laws, honoris causa; or  
Honorary Doctor of Letters and Literature, honoris causa; or  
Honorary Doctor of Public Service, honoris causa; or  
Honorary Doctor of Science, honoris causa; or  
an honorary doctorate as appropriate to the individual being honored.

## **Limitations**

Westfield State University shall not grant an honorary degree to current members of the faculty, administration, Board of Trustees, or any individual associated with higher education where a conflict of interest or a perceived conflict of interest would be created with the awarding of the degree.

## **Public Announcements**

Public announcement of the award is to be handled exclusively through the Office of the President. The President will officially notify the individual upon whom an honorary degree will be conferred. The President will determine when and where the honorary degree will be conferred.

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## Appendix A

To nominate a candidate for an honorary degree, please complete the form below and submit it electronically to the Office of Academic Affairs. Supporting documentation should be attached.

Name of Nominee:

Nominee's contact information, if available:

Area of Achievement (Please check all that apply):

- Artistic Creation
- Humanitarianism
- Human Rights
- Innovation
- Research
- Scholarship
- Social Activism
- Other (please specify)

Describe and explain the nature of the Nominee's accomplishments:

Please explain how the accomplishments reflect the goals and mission of Westfield State University:

Please attach a curriculum vita and/or provide biographical information.

The following information must be provided, however will be redacted in the blind review process.

Name of Nominator:

Contact information for Nominator:

Campus department or office (if applicable):

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## Honorary Degree Nomination Form Westfield State University

Nominee:	
Contact Information for Nominee:	
Nominator (Redacted for blind review):	Date:
Contact Information for Nominator (Redacted for blind review):	
Area of Achievement (Check all that apply): <input type="checkbox"/> Artistic Creation <input type="checkbox"/> Humanitarianism <input type="checkbox"/> Human Rights <input type="checkbox"/> Innovation <input type="checkbox"/> Research <input type="checkbox"/> Scholarship <input type="checkbox"/> Social Activism <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):	
Describe and explain the nature of the Nominee's accomplishments:	
Explain how the accomplishments reflect the goals and mission of Westfield State University:	
<p><u>Please attach</u> a curriculum vita, resume, or significant biographical information.</p> <p>After completing the above, print this form and send to: Office of Academic Affairs, Attn: Vice President, Academic Affairs. It may be submitted electronically to <a href="mailto:lkonig@westfield.ma.edu">lkonig@westfield.ma.edu</a></p>	