

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HONORARY DEGREES

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, 2025

232 ENGLISH BUILDING

MINUTES

Present: Chair Prasanta Kalita, Meng Chen, Paul Davidson, Patrick Holt, Gayle Magee, Pollyanna Rhee
Ex officio: Laura Wilhelm-Barr

Absent: Kevin Richards

Guest: Jon Hale (Chair, Senate Executive Committee)

1. CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Senate Committee on Honorary Degrees (HD) was called to order at 12:30 pm with Chair Kalita presiding.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the November 4, 2024 meeting were approved as distributed.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

No requests received.

4. CHAIR'S REMARKS

Chair Kalita thanked committee members for their service on HD this year.

Chair Kalita reported that, following the failure of the motion to approve the honorary degree award for Shahid Kahn at the December 9, 2024 Senate meeting, the University has begun a review of the honorary degree award process specifically in regards to the Illinois Open Meetings Act (OMA). Currently, OMA requires discussion of honorary degree nominations to occur during open session.

Jon Hale, Chair, Senate Executive Committee, noted that Chancellor Jones has requested a pause on honorary degree award nominations. He noted the desire to avoid future incidents of negative discussion regarding a nominee publicly at the time of the Senate discussion, so a possible revision to OMA that would allow nominations to be discussed in closed session is being pursued.

Hale also noted possibly adding the chair of the Senate Committee on Honorary Degrees as a member of the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) so that regular updates can be provided. Chair Kalita expressed willingness to attend SEC meetings.

5. OLD BUSINESS

a) **HD.25.02, Nomination by the Department of Dance**

Four letters of support have been received. HD will discuss the nomination further next year.

b) **HD.25.04, Nomination by the School of Art and Design**

Two letters of support have been received. Additional letters of support will be requested. HD will discuss the nomination further next year.

6. NEW BUSINESS

a) **HD.25.06, 2024-2025 Annual Report of the Senate Committee on Honorary Degrees**

HD reviewed the draft annual report and committee members noted no revisions. The annual report will be submitted for inclusion on the April 28, 2025 Senate agenda.

7. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:20 pm.

Franci Miller
Committee Support Staff