PROPOSAL: Honorary Degree Policy Revisions

Background

An honorary degree is recognized as one of education’s most significant accolades. Western Michigan University (WMU) intends to award honorary degrees on a selective basis to exemplary individuals who merit distinguished recognition for genuine achievement and contribution within a field or activity that aligns with WMU’s mission. Only the Board of Trustees may authorize an honorary degree. The Board’s authority is codified in Section 2 E of the WMU Board of Trustees Bylaws.

In 1944, WMU President, Paul V. Sangren awarded the first honorary degree at WMU. Revisions to the policy were adopted in 1975 and 2015. An effort evolved throughout the 2019 Summer and Fall Semesters to again revise the existing Honorary Degree Policy. The secretary to the Board of Trustees collaborated with the Faculty Senate president and executive board with input from other executive leaders to better align intent with process. The result is the development of dual pathways for vetting nominations through either a scholastic or service lens with defined structures for broadening representation on the review committees.

Recommended Action

It is recommended the Board of Trustees approve the Honorary Degree Policy Revisions.