

# Report of the Faculty Committee on Honorary Degrees

August 30, 2006

After many years of not participating in the awarding of honorary degrees, the faculty voted at its March 2005 meeting to reconstitute the Faculty Committee on Honorary Degrees and charged the Committee on Faculty and Academic Personnel to consider changes to the section of the Faculty Handbook pertaining to honorary degrees. At the April 2005 Faculty Meeting, the Personnel Committee proposed changes to section II.C.3 of the Faculty Handbook, which were adopted at the September 2005 Faculty Meeting, and charged the Faculty Committee on Honorary Degrees to report back to the faculty in September 2006 with an assessment of the process. This report fulfills that charge.

The adopted procedures require that nominations for honorary degrees “be evaluated by the [Faculty] Committee in consultation with the Trustee Sub-committee on Honorary Degrees. The list of candidates agreed on by both the Committee and the Trustee Sub-committee will be submitted to the President for review. The President’s recommendations from this list will be submitted to the Committee on Educational Policy of the Board of Trustees for its approval and recommendations to the Board.”

After nominations for honorary degrees were received in the fall of 2005, the Faculty Committee on Honorary Degrees and the Trustee Sub-committee on Honorary Degrees met on November 17. Many issues were discussed, including the annual timetable, nomination process, criteria for an honorary degree, voting procedures, and the multiyear status of nominees and agreed upon candidates. None of the issues was resolved at this first meeting, and no nominees were evaluated. It was later agreed to have a conference call to consider on an ad hoc basis one nominee of mutual interest to the two committees. This candidate was agreed on by both committees in a conference call meeting on December 14. The candidate, however, was unavailable for Bucknell University’s Commencement in May 2006, so no honorary degree was awarded.

The Faculty and Trustee committees met again in April 2006. At this meeting, agreement was reached concerning several issues:

Annual timetable. Nominations received by August 15 will be considered at the September and November meetings of the combined committees.

Nomination process. Nominations require a 1-2 page letter plus biographical information on the nominee. Letters of support and published articles about the nominee will also be accepted. Nominations can remain active for two academic years.

Criteria. Language in the Faculty Handbook was accepted as criteria: “honorary degrees are awarded in order to recognize individuals whose work exemplifies the qualities of intellect, character, and creativity most cherished by the University. The Committee gives special consideration to those individuals whose distinguished contributions have not yet been widely or formally recognized outside their own fields and to individuals who are part of the Bucknell community.” The Faculty and Academic Personnel Committee report accepted in April 2005 also charged the Faculty Committee on Honorary Degrees that “candidates should not be judged ineligible for an honorary

degree based on characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation or on their religious or political views.”

Voting procedures. The adopted procedures require a majority of both committees to approve of a nominee for the nominee’s name to be forwarded to the President, and allow up to eight candidates per year to be agree upon.

The 2006-2007 academic year will be the first during which the agreed upon process will be implemented. The working relationship between the Faculty Committee on Honorary Degrees and the Trustee Sub-committee on Honorary Degrees has been constructive and cordial. At this point in time, no further changes to the Faculty Committee’s charge or to the process for granting honorary degrees are necessary.