

UBC Honorary Degree Nomination:

Frequently Asked Questions

Who can nominate? Any member of the university or the community may nominate. Nominations arising from and/or supported by academic units are particularly welcome.

Who can be nominated? Anyone, with the exception of those currently holding regular faculty appointments at UBC (on occasion, exceptions may be made in the case of clinical or emeritus professors), and those currently holding political office. UBC does not award honorary degrees posthumously, and those recommended for such degrees must be able to attend the ceremony in person.

Who makes the selection? The Senate Tributes Committee, comprised of faculty, student and convocation senators, as well as the President, Chancellor, Director of Ceremonies and the Registrar, reviews all cases, deliberates, and proposes to Senate a slate of candidates each year.

How is the decision made? From among the many names put forward, the Committee selects a slate that balances representation of various attributes, including field of excellence, with other factors such as timing.

How much work is required to put forward a nomination? We have been trying to significantly reduce the burden of nomination, especially where the name being put forward has a public profile and information is readily accessible. For such cases, simply proposing the name, with the rationale for why that individual would be the “right” one in that particular field, may be sufficient. While a more extensive submission (using the online application system at <http://www.senate.ubc.ca/vancouver/honorary.cfm>) is appreciated, especially in cases where the committee will require data in order to understand the basis of the nomination, it is not required.

What makes a nomination successful? The strongest cases are those that reflect genuinely spectacular and exceptional achievements, regardless of the field or walk of life, and would be predicted to generate widespread excitement within sectors of the university community.

What will happen once a nomination is made? All deliberations are held in the strictest confidentiality until the individuals recommended by Senate have formally accepted the invitation and committed to a ceremony date. The university makes the list of awardees known through the public press as soon as possible each year. The Committee automatically retains nomination files for a minimum of three years, regardless of whether the file is updated. Cases that are not successful in the initial year may well “rise to the top” on a subsequent year when matters of timing and competition are more favorable, or when further information of relevance to the decision can be obtained.

Are controversial cases accepted? Yes. The university welcomes cases of a controversial nature. Such cases are more likely to be successful if they include sufficient information to help the Committee understand the nature of that controversy so that it can consider how it would be managed.

Does the nominee have to have a UBC connection? No. Sometimes such a connection becomes part of the story of what makes a candidate great. And on other occasions, the university might benefit from creating such a connection.

Does it help to champion a case? While lobbying Committee members is frowned upon, the Committee welcomes the information about why individuals and departments are so enthusiastic about a case. Where timing is of particular concern, such as a nomination that might showcase the contributions of a field of study during the anniversary of the academic unit, nominators are strongly encouraged to provide evidence of departmental support.

If my nomination is unsuccessful, will I find out why? Unfortunately not, since that would require information about other files in the pool of candidates. Unfortunately, the Committee always sees many more excellent cases than it can put forward. And on occasion, a name may have been recommended but not accepted or awarded, with such negotiations being confidential. Although it cannot give feedback on individual cases, the Committee is happy to provide guidance on attributes that might strengthen a nomination such that its attributes are clearly understood.

Further Questions?

Contact Sally Thorne, Senate Tributes Committee Chair 2017-2020

sally.thorne@ubc.ca

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