

## VII. STANDING COMMITTEES

### A. Academic and Student Affairs Committee

#### Granting of Honorary Degrees to Francia Russell and Kent Stowell

#### RECOMMENDED ACTION:

It is the recommendation of the administration and the Academic and Student Affairs Committee that the Board of Regents approve the granting of Honorary Doctor of Arts degrees to Francia Russell and Kent Stowell, founding creative directors of Pacific Northwest Ballet.

#### BACKGROUND:

RCW 28B.20.130(3) grants to the Board of Regents, upon recommendation of the faculty, the authority to confer honorary degrees upon persons other than graduates “in recognition of their learning or devotion to literature, arts, or sciences.” The Faculty Council on University Relations is responsible for recommending candidates for honorary degrees and has sent to President Emmert the recommendation that Ms. Russell and Mr. Stowell be awarded Honorary Doctor of Arts degrees at the University’s June commencement ceremony. President Emmert concurs with the recommendation and brings it to the Board of Regents on behalf of the faculty.

In 1977, Francia Russell and Kent Stowell were appointed co-artistic directors of Pacific Northwest Ballet (PNB), which they developed from a small regional ballet organization into one of the most celebrated ballet companies and schools in the world. Today, PNB is among the top-ranked ballet companies in the United States. For 28 years, Ms. Russell and Mr. Stowell led PNB and were committed to their shared vision of creating a renowned ballet company for the Northwest. Under their leadership, young boys and girls became professional artists, audiences were inspired and educated, and Seattle became the cultural mecca of the Pacific Northwest.

They have been devoted guardians and teachers of the works of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s greatest choreographer, George Balanchine. Ms. Russell is among a select group of former New York City Ballet dancers who stage the Balanchine repertoire internationally by permission of the Balanchine Trust. Her early dance training led to an invitation to join the New York City Ballet, where she rose from corps member to soloist. She was appointed ballet master of the company by Balanchine himself and sent by him to stage his works throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia. She was the first to do so in the People’s Republic of China, for the Shanghai Ballet, and later for the Kirov Ballet, the historic first authorized performance of Balanchine’s work in his birthplace.

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Mr. Stowell also danced as a soloist with the New York City Ballet and went on to become ballet master of the Frankfurt Ballet. In 1975, he and Ms. Russell were appointed co-artistic directors of the company. As a choreographer, he created works that have thrilled and delighted audiences here and abroad for nearly four decades. His contributions to the Pacific Northwest Ballet repertory include *Swan Lake*, *Cinderella*, *Carmina Burana*, *Silver Lining* and what has come to be a national treasure and endearing Northwest favorite, his brilliant collaboration with Maurice Sendak, *Nutcracker*.

Their vision and dedication have taken Pacific Northwest Ballet from modest beginnings in spare facilities to an institution that trains and cares for dancers as no other in the world. Their legacy is not only a ballet company of international acclaim, but the promise, through their school, that future dancers may gain the mastery required to succeed in their very demanding art, and that future audiences may enjoy the profound experience of watching them perform.

For the acclaimed ballet company they established, for being compassionate and innovative teachers, and for their unwavering commitment to preserving the highest level of artistry in dance, it would be an honor to confer upon Francia Russell and Kent Stowell Honorary Doctor of Arts degrees at the June commencement.