

VII. STANDING COMMITTEES

A. Academic and Student Affairs

Honorary Baccalaureate Degrees for Japanese American Students at the University of Washington Who Were Sent by the U.S. Government to be Incarcerated in Camps During World War IIRECOMMENDED 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 baccalaureate degrees to those Japanese American students at the University of Washington who were sent by the U.S. government to be incarcerated in camps during World War II.

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 of the Department of American Ethnic Studies has recommended that these students be recognized with an honorary bachelor degree, *Nunc pro tunc*, or “Now for Then.” The Faculty Council on University Relations, which is responsible for recommending the conferral of honorary degrees, at its February 8, 2008 meeting unanimously passed a resolution supporting these honorary degrees. President Emmert concurs with the recommendation and brings it to the Board of Regents on behalf of the faculty.

On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, resulting in nearly 120,000 Nikkei, persons of Japanese ancestry, being sent from their West Coast homes to incarceration camps for the duration of the war. At the time, 440 Japanese American students were enrolled as undergraduates at the University of Washington. All of them were sent away, interrupting their lives and their educations. Although some of them returned, or received their degrees from other colleges, many were unable to do so. Dr. Lee Paul Sieg, President of the University of Washington at the time of these students’ removal, along with other university officials, many faculty, and student colleagues, publicly lamented the forced removal.

By conferring honorary baccalaureate degrees *Nunc pro tunc*, the University of Washington recognizes these Japanese American students as deserving of the bachelor degree they were seeking but for whom the opportunity to do so was abruptly taken away. Conferring these degrees would formally acknowledge them to be a welcome part of the University of Washington family and would symbolize their legitimate standing among University of Washington alumni.

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Units supporting this action include the Department of American Ethnic Studies, the Office of the Provost, the College of Arts and Sciences, the Office of Student Life, the Office of Minority Affairs, UW Libraries, and the UW Alumni Association. From the greater Seattle community, supporting organizations include the UW Nikkei Alumni Association, the Japanese American Citizens League, Seattle Chapter, and Densho.

A commemorating ceremony is planned for May 18, 2008, 1:45-3:30 p.m. in Kane Hall 120. A reception will follow in the Walker-Ames room.