

## VII. STANDING COMMITTEE

## A. Academic and Student Affairs Committee

Honorary Degree—William H. Gates IIIRECOMMENDED ACTION:

It is the recommendation of the administration and the Academic and Student Affairs Committee that the Board of Regents approve the granting of an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree to William H. Gates III, computer software pioneer and co-founder of Microsoft, and world philanthropist and co-founder of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

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 “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. In February 2007, the Council recommended to President Emmert that Mr. Gates be awarded an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree. Mr. Gates was unable to attend the University’s June commencement ceremonies, but has been chosen as the featured speaker at this Fall’s Freshman Convocation ceremony. It is recommended that the honorary degree be conferred at this time. President Emmert concurs with the recommendation and brings it to the Board of Regents on behalf of the faculty.

Mr. Gates has changed the world twice. The first profound change for which he deserves credit is the impact of his vision on the information age, a transformative era made possible in part from his and Paul Allen’s creativity in enabling personal computing. The remarkable growth and success of Microsoft, the company they co-founded, opened whole new vistas in access to information by people around the world from all different cultures and walks of life, as long as there was access to a personal computer. This change is as profound as any the world has experienced and certainly rivals the industrial revolution in the impact it has had on the way people live their lives. The success of Microsoft made possible the second way in which Mr. Gates—along with other members of his family—has changed the world and for which this honorary degree is being recommended. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is the largest philanthropic foundation on earth and it is changing and improving people’s lives worldwide. Its fundamental belief that all lives, no matter where they are lived, have equal value and deserve equal opportunity at health and prosperity, drives its vision to use its substantial resources to improve the health and well-being of people in less fortunate circumstances, whether on the continent of Africa or in rural or urban America. The work of the Gates Foundation indelibly bears the mark of its founders—it is their intellect, vision, philosophy and deep engagement that empower the Foundation to accomplish its work.

For the technological innovations his mind and passion have brought to modern life, and for his far-reaching and visionary efforts through philanthropy to improve the lives of people throughout the world struggling with poverty, disease, hunger, and lack of education, it would be an honor to confer upon William H. Gates III an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree at Freshman Convocation.