

VII. STANDING COMMITTEE

A. Academic and Student Affairs Committee

Honorary Degree—William H. Gates

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 an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree to William H. Gates, prominent Seattle attorney, civic stalwart, University of Washington Regent, and co-chair from its inception 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. The occasion of this fall’s Freshman Convocation ceremony provides an appropriate occasion to confer the degree. President Emmert concurs with the recommendation and brings it to the Board of Regents on behalf of the faculty.

Mr. Gates has been an exemplary member of the legal profession in our community for more than half a century, as well as a volunteer in many civic organizations and on behalf of many noteworthy social causes. He has also served as a regent of the University of Washington for 11 years, and just concluded eight years chairing the University’s enormously successful \$2.7 billion fundraising drive, “Campaign UW: Creating Futures.” But it is not for these accomplishments that Mr. Gates is being recommended for this honorary degree. Rather, it is for the work that he—along with other members of his family—has done to improve the lives of people the world over through the philanthropic work of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The Foundation is the largest philanthropic entity of its kind, 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 the Gates family and its patriarch—it is their intellect, vision, philosophy and deep engagement that empower the Foundation to accomplish its work.

For his generosity of time, resources, intellect, and spirit, for his steadfast dedication to causes that foster others’ economic, emotional and physical well-being, and for his far-reaching and visionary efforts through philanthropy to improve the lives of people throughout the world, it would be an honor to confer upon William H. Gates an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree at Freshman Convocation.