VII. STANDING COMMITTEES

A. Academic and Student Affairs Committee

Honorary Degree – Christine O. Gregoire

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 Laws degree to Christine O. Gregoire, former governor of the State of Washington and long-time public servant.

BACKGROUND

RCW 28B.20.130(6) 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 Special Committee on Honorary Degrees is responsible for recommending candidates for honorary degrees. On March 29, 2015, the Special Committee recommended unanimously to Interim President Cauce that Ms. Gregoire be awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree at the University of Washington June commencement ceremony, where she will be the commencement speaker. President Cauce concurs with the recommendation and brings it to the Board of Regents on behalf of the faculty.

Ms. Gregoire’s career in public service to the State of Washington left a substantial legacy to the field of public policy, governance, and to our society. Her extraordinary accomplishments have enhanced our understanding of government and public service and benefited the citizens of the state. Throughout her career in public service, she has not backed away from the most challenging public policy issues. With vision and perseverance, she has asserted unwavering leadership and fought for what she believes is right.

Governor Gregoire has distinguished herself as a tireless champion for the people of the State of Washington. From proposing reforms to transform the state education system into the nation’s best, to major initiatives that streamlined government and made it more efficient, she has made important contributions to make Washington a great place to live, work, start a business, and study.

As Director of the Washington Department of Ecology, Ms. Gregoire negotiated the safe cleanup and permanent storage of radioactive waste at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. Later, as the first woman to be elected to the position as
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Attorney General for the State of Washington, a position she held for three terms, she led a statewide program that resulted in a comprehensive reform of the state’s juvenile system. She fought to pass tougher ethics laws for state government and was the lead negotiator in the groundbreaking settlement of state lawsuits against the tobacco industry. She is responsible for the Chelan Accord, a 1990 landmark agreement that improved relationships between tribal and state governments. She also championed the 1993 Elkhorn Decision which ensured that dams are operated in a way that minimizes adverse impact on salmon and water quality.

Ms. Gregoire worked on child abuse cases, coordinating with social workers to get children removed from abusive family situations and being placed with relatives or foster homes. She was responsible for reforming health care, reducing health care costs, and ensuring access to health care to every child in Washington.

As governor over two terms, 2005-2013, she showed skill and vision in bringing together legislators on both sides of the aisle to pass vital legislation. She has a long and distinguished record of environmental policy decisions to improve our state’s environment. The adoption of the Columbia River Basin Water Supply Act, in 2006, delivering significant improvements in stream flows, salmon habitat, and water supply benefits is one of her major accomplishments. She advocated for the adoption of the California Clean Air Act, which improved car standards and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. Finally, Governor Gregoire created the Puget Sound Partnership in 2007 to restore and protect Puget Sound.

She worked to balance the budget shortfall while expanding health care coverage to low-income children. While creating jobs in the State of Washington, Governor Gregoire focused on transportation infrastructure improvements, social services, and early childhood education. In 2006, the Department of Early Learning was founded as a Governor's cabinet-level agency by combining programs formerly housed in three agencies that were focused on early learning and support services. The department was named by Harvard University as the most innovative department in the country. Governor Gregoire’s administration was recognized by Governing Magazine, which named her Public Official of the Year in 2007, when the Rainy Day Fund (RDF) was enacted. The RDF was a major step toward securing long-term investments in the state’s essential public services. The Pew Center on the States ranked her administration third for managing the budget and state personnel and Forbes ranked Washington as the third best state in the nation for doing business, both in 2008.

In January 2010, Governor Gregoire, announced her support for gay marriage and promised to sign a bill if passed by the legislature. “This is our responsibility to
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reflect the equality that we want in our state,” said the governor, who ultimately signed the bill.

Born in Adrian, Michigan, Ms. Gregoire was raised in Auburn, Washington. After graduating from Auburn High School, she attended the University of Washington where in 1969 she earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in speech and sociology. She earned her Juris Doctor degree in 1977 from the Gonzaga University School of Law.

For her innovative leadership and legacy of statesmanship in service to the citizens of Washington, it would be an honor to confer upon Christine Gregoire an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree at the June commencement ceremony.