

State University of New York / College at Old Westbury

Old Westbury
Long Island, New York 11568
Telephone (516) 876-3000

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: SUNY Old Westbury Faculty Senate
FROM: Selby Hickey, Bob Hoyte, Al Rabil, Basilio Serrano
DATE: March 5, 1993
RE: Honorary Degrees

The process for selecting recipients of honorary degrees in SUNY is fairly straightforward. The process begins on the campus; a faculty committee deliberates on all suggested candidates and forwards approved nominations to the campus president. The president reviews the nominations and forwards those the president approves to a University-wide committee in Albany. If the University committee approves a nomination, the campus is notified to initiate discussion with the nominee to establish whether he/she is willing to accept an honorary degree and if so, to reach agreement on a mutually convenient date for conferring the degree. Once this has been accomplished, the University presents the name to the Board of Trustees for final action.

The purpose of this memo is to inform the Faculty Senate that at a meeting of the Honorary Degree Committee held yesterday, the faculty members of the Committee learned that three individuals nominated by the President of Old Westbury and subsequently approved by the SUNY-wide Committee to receive Honorary Degrees from Old Westbury were never recommended by the College's Committee. In fact, no faculty member present at yesterday's meeting had ever seen any papers on the candidates, nor attended any meetings where their candidacy was discussed. The process required by SUNY was entirely by-passed.

Dr. Hall, who serves as Chair of the Old Westbury Honorary Degree Committee, responded to questions by saying that he did not know who had made the nominations; that he had been aware the names had gone forward from the campus, but that he had assumed the necessary information had been circulated to Committee members for approval. Bob McVeigh, the Executive Assistant to the President, who serves as staff support to the Committee, responded to questions by saying that the President generally acts upon receipt of packets of information about each candidate, accompanied by a cover letter announcing that these are the recommendations approved by the College's Honorary Degree Committee. Bob McVeigh pointed out that these documents originate in the Office of Academic Affairs. Dr. Hall agreed. Neither Dr. Hall nor Mr. McVeigh could give a definitive explanation as to how the breach of process had occurred.

The faculty members of the Honorary Degree Committee consider the violation of campus process in this matter extremely serious. At the meeting today, after considerable discussion, we concluded that the normal work of the Committee could not be continued under present conditions, and that no further work on nominations for next year should go forward unless and until the breach of process has been investigated by the administration and a report made to the faculty, accompanied by a written guarantee that the process will be rigorously honored in the future. We asked that the discussion and its outcome be reflected in minutes of the meeting.

Present at the March 4, 1993 meeting:

K. Hall, S. Hickey, R. Hoyte, R. McVeigh, A. Rabil, B. Serrano