Authorization to Award Honorary Degrees; OSU, PSU, and SOU

Summary: The State Board of Higher Education policy permits institutions, with the concurrence of their faculty, to award honorary degrees. Each institution proposing the award of honorary degrees has received the Chancellor’s approval of criteria and procedures for selection that ensure the award honors distinguished achievement and outstanding contributions to the institution, state, or society.

Oregon State University
Oregon State University requests that honorary doctorates be conferred on Mr. Frits Bolkestein and Dr. Donald Pettit at OSU's June 2010 Commencement.

With a career spanning more than 50 years and including leadership positions in concerns ranging from Royal Dutch Oil to the Dutch Parliament to the European Commission, Frits Bolkestein is perhaps Oregon State University’s most prominent and successful foreign alumnus.

Born in Amsterdam in 1933, Bolkestein graduated preparatory school in the Netherlands before traveling to the United States in 1951 to enroll as an undergraduate at Oregon State, where he studied mathematics for two years. He returned home in 1953, completing his undergraduate and master’s degrees from the University of Amsterdam.

His business career began in 1960 at Royal Dutch Shell and saw him serve in positions in concerns ranging from Royal Dutch Oil to the Dutch Parliament to the European Commission, Frits Bolkestein is perhaps Oregon State University’s most prominent and successful foreign alumnus.

Bolkestein left Shell in 1978 to become a member of Parliament and, in 1982, was named Minister of International Trade. He served as Minister of Defense, 1988-89, and for the next eight years was the elected party leader of the VVD, the Netherlands’ liberal party. In all, he served in Parliament for 17 years before becoming a European Commissioner in 1999.

Since 2004, he has been a professor at the Dutch universities of Leiden and Delft. Over the course of his career, he has written 13 books and is currently preparing another on the influence of intellectuals in political life. Bolkestein is president of the Telders Foundation, a think-tank connected with the VVD, a member of the supervisory board of the Central Bank of The Netherlands, non-executive director of Air France-KLM and an advisor of PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Bolkestein is married to Femke Boersma, a retired Dutch actress, and has three children.
He’s an Eagle Scout, accomplished chemical engineer, self-described “geeky-nerdy type,” an inventor and an Antarctic explorer, but Oregon State University alumnus Donald R. Pettit is best known as a NASA astronaut and veteran of six months in space.

Born in Silverton, Oregon, in 1955, Pettit received a bachelor’s degree in chemical engineering from OSU in 1978 and later a doctorate from the University of Arizona. He worked for 12 years as a scientist at the Los Alamos National Laboratory and was involved in, among other projects, development of technology to return humans to the moon and explore Mars. He was selected as an astronaut candidate in 1996 and, in 2002-03, he served in the first of his two space missions.

It wasn’t routine. While Pettit was at the International Space Station working on numerous U.S. and Russian science experiments and performing two spacewalks that had not been anticipated, the space shuttle Columbia disintegrated on re-entry into earth’s atmosphere. This tragedy grounded the American shuttle fleet. Pettit had to extend his stay in space for an additional two months and returned to Earth on a comparatively small Russian Soyuz spacecraft. That ship also malfunctioned, coming in “like a meteor” more steeply than expected, missing its landing site by several hundred miles and leaving the astronauts stranded for hours after landing on the treeless steppes of Kazakhstan.

Despite that rocky experience, Pettit still speaks of the joys and magic of space travel. He spent another 15 days in space as a mission specialist in 2008. A lifelong inventor, he developed a “zero-G” coffee cup on one trip. And in 2006-07, he joined the Antarctic Search for Meteorites, spending six weeks there to collect samples, including a lunar meteorite, not to mention doing emergency repairs to a snowmobile and even performing emergency dental surgery.

Along with numerous other career honors and awards, Pettit has received the OSU Alumni Fellows Award and the OSU Distinguished Service Award. On one mission, he took time to speak with a group of OSU engineering students while orbiting the Earth. He even traveled to space with a textbook on thermodynamics written by one of his former OSU professors. He remains mindful and appreciative of the education he received here that served as the basis for his illustrious career and is always quick to remember his alma mater.

Pettit is married and has two children.

Portland State University

Portland State University requests authorization to award an honorary doctorate at Portland State’s 2010 Commencement Ceremony. The University is proud to recognize the achievements of Marian Wright Edelman, lifelong advocate for disadvantaged Americans and President of the Children’s Defense Fund.

Mrs. Edelman, a graduate of Spelman College and Yale Law School, began her career in the mid-1960s when, as the first black woman admitted to the Mississippi Bar, she directed the NAACP
Legal Defense and Educational Fund office in Jackson, Mississippi. In 1968, she moved to Washington, D.C. as counsel for the Poor People’s Campaign that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., began organizing before his death. She founded the Washington Research Project, a public interest law firm and the parent body of the Children’s Defense Fund. For two years she served as the Director of the Center for Law and Education at Harvard University and, in 1973, began the Children’s Defense Fund. Under her leadership, that organization has become the nation’s strongest voice for children and families.

Mrs. Edelman served on the Board of Trustees of Spelman College, which she chaired from 1976 to 1987, and was the first woman elected by alumni as a member of the Yale University Corporation on which she served from 1971 to 1977. She has received over a hundred honorary degrees and many awards including the Albert Schweitzer Humanitarian Price, the Heinz Award, and a MacArthur Foundation Price Fellowship. In 2000, she received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation’s highest civilian award, and the Robert F. Kennedy Lifetime Achievement Award for her writings, which include: Families in Peril: An Agenda for Social Change; The Measure of Our Success: A Letter to My Children and Yours; Guide My Feet: Meditations and Prayers on Loving and Working for Children; Stand for Children; Lanterns: A Memoir of Mentors; Hold My Hand: Prayers for Building a Movement to Leave No Child Behind; I’m Your Child, God: Prayers for Our Children; I Can Make a Difference: A Treasury to Inspire Our Children; and The Sea Is So Wide and My Boat Is So Small: Charting a Course for the Next Generation.

Mrs. Edelman is a board member for the Robin Hood Foundation, the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, and the Association to Benefit Children. She is a member of the Selection Committee of the Profiles in Courage Award of the John F. Kennedy Library, the Council of Foreign Relations, the American Philosophical Society, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences.

Southern Oregon University

Southern Oregon University requests authorization to award an honorary doctorate to Ms. Ann Curry, co-anchor, “Dateline NBC” and news anchor, “NBC TODAY Show,” at SOU’s 2010 Commencement Ceremony.

Ann Curry’s father was an American of predominantly French and Scots-Irish descent who met her Japanese mother during the U.S. occupation of Japan following World War II. Her childhood followed her father’s military career and she was raised in San Diego and Alameda, California; Japan; Virginia Beach, Virginia; and Ashland, Oregon. She graduated from Ashland High School and, in 1978, received a B.A. from the University of Oregon’s School of Journalism and Communication.

In 1978, Ann Curry took an internship at KTVL in Medford, Oregon, eventually becoming the station's first female news reporter. In 1981, she took a three-year post as a reporter and anchor at KGW in Portland. She then moved to Los Angeles, where she was a reporter for KCBS-TV from 1984 to 1990. While there, she was awarded two Emmys.
In 1990, Ms. Curry signed on with NBC News, first working as the network's Chicago correspondent and then anchoring NBC News at Sunrise from 1991 to 1996. She also served as a replacement anchor and newscaster for the TODAY show. In 2005, she joined Stone Phillips as co-host of Dateline NBC, while continuing as news anchor at TODAY. She has earned a reputation for her coverage of global humanitarian crises from such hot spots as Baghdad, Sri Lanka, Rwanda, Albania, and Darfur.

Ms. Curry has distinguished herself in global humanitarian reporting. From March 2006 to March 2007, she traveled three times to Sudan to report on the violence and ethnic cleansing taking place in Darfur and Chad. While there, she provided in-depth reports focusing on the victims who have been caught in the deadly conflict in that region and she also conducted exclusive interviews with Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir and Chadian President Idriss Deby. In July 2006, she reported on the Israel-Lebanon war and was one of the only American reporters to file stories on both sides of the conflict from Beirut and Northern Israel.

In the summer of 2005, Ms. Curry traveled with First Lady Laura Bush throughout Africa to discuss issues that plague the continent such as the HIV/AIDS epidemic and women's rights and education. She was the first network news anchor to report from inside the tsunami zone in Southeast Asia, filing live and taped reports from Sri Lanka for Dateline, TODAY, and NBC Nightly News. She was also the first network news anchor to report on the humanitarian refugee crisis caused by the genocide in Kosovo, reporting for NBC News from Albania and Macedonia.

In the first two weeks following the attacks of September 11, Ms. Curry reported live from ground zero every day. When the United States bombed Al Qaeda targets in Afghanistan in November 2001, she reported extensively from the USS Theodore Roosevelt in the Arabian Sea, and landed the first exclusive interview with the war's military commander, General Tommy Franks. She reported from Baghdad in the weeks leading up to the war in Iraq and then from the USS Constellation as the war began, interviewing fighter pilots who flew the first wave of bombing runs over Iraq. She also filed reports from inside Iraq, from Qatar, and Kuwait during the first weeks of the war.

Ms. Curry's exclusive interviews include Liberia's Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the first female elected President of an African nation; the first highly sought after interview with Thomas Hamill, the truck driver for Halliburton subsidiary KBR, who escaped captivity in Iraq; the first interview with accused spy Wen Ho Lee after he was cleared of all charges of espionage against the United States; and the first interview with the parents of the McLaughey septuplets. She has also repeatedly landed the first exclusive interview with Lance Armstrong after his Tour de France wins.

Ann Curry has earned two Emmys, four Golden Mikes, several Associated Press Certificates of Excellence, two Gracies, and an award for Excellence in Reporting from the NAACP. She has been awarded by Americares, the Anti-Defamation League as a Woman of Achievement, and
the Asian American Journalists Association, receiving its National Journalism Award in 2003. She has also won numerous awards for her charity work, primarily for breast cancer research.

Volunteerism
- Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation
- Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation
- Americares
- Save the Children
- Médecins Sans Frontières
- Airline Ambassadors

Funded scholarship
- Ann Curry Scholarship for University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication Broadcasting Students, 2002

**Staff Recommendation to the Board:**
Staff recommends the Board authorize Oregon State University to award honorary doctorates to Mr. Frits Bolkestein and Dr. Donald Pettit; Portland State University to award an honorary doctorate to Mrs. Marian Wright Edelman; and Southern Oregon University to award an honorary doctorate to Ms. Ann Curry at their June 2010 Commencement ceremonies.

*(Board action required.)*