




MEMORANDUM

Office of the Provost

Honorary Degrees
Committee

To: Members of the USC Community

From: Margo Apostolos 
Chair, Honorary Degrees Committee

Date: September 27, 2005

Subject: Honorary Degree Nominations

The Honorary Degrees Committee needs your help in identifying distinguished individuals to be considered for an honorary degree at future spring commencements. The honorary degree is the highest award that the University of Southern California confers. It is given to honor individuals who have distinguished themselves through extraordinary achievements in scholarship, the professions, or other creative activities, whether or not they are widely known by the general public; to honor alumni and other individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the welfare and development of USC or the communities of which they are a part; to recognize exceptional acts of philanthropy to the university; and to elevate the university in the eyes of the world by honoring individuals who are widely known and highly regarded for achievements in their respective fields of endeavor.

Any USC faculty, staff, student, alumni member, or trustee may nominate a potential candidate. An individual's nomination need not come from someone in his/her academic area, and we also welcome nominations of persons with distinguished accomplishments outside of conventional academic fields. The Committee is particularly interested in candidates from diverse backgrounds, and whose own accomplishments might serve to highlight areas in which the University has developed exceptional strength.

The initial submission of an honorary degree nomination requires a brief summary statement of a few paragraphs, outlining the nominee's career, achievements, and appropriateness for an honorary degree from USC. Nominations should be submitted to the Chair of the Honorary Degrees Committee, c/o the Office of the Provost, Administration Building Room 102, MC 4019, or visit our web site at www.usc.edu/admin/provost/honorarydegrees.

After review by the Honorary Degrees Committee, a group of nominees of outstanding distinction and accomplishment are recommended to the President of the University, who then forwards a slate for approval to the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees and the full Board of Trustees.

The following individuals have received honorary degrees in the past three years:

May 2005

- Neil A. Armstrong, Doctor of Humane Letters. A USC alumnus who was the first person to walk on the moon, Neil Armstrong has distinguished himself as a skilled pilot, a brave and innovative explorer, and a dedicated citizen, educator, and war veteran. Mr. Armstrong delivered the commencement address.
- Dennis F. Dougherty, Doctor of Humane Letters. As USC's Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, Dennis Dougherty has played a major role in USC's rapid ascent into the top ranks of premier research universities. He has developed an administrative model that is at the very forefront of American higher education.
- Eberhardt Rechtin, Doctor of Science. The founder of systems architecting as an academic field, USC Professor Emeritus Eberhardt Rechtin has made pivotal contributions to telecommunications technology and systems architecture through his distinguished career in the aerospace industry, in government, and in higher education.
- Andrew J. Viterbi, Doctor of Science. USC trustee, professor, and engineering alumnus Andrew J. Viterbi has distinguished himself as a communications pioneer, a visionary scholar, a skilled entrepreneur, and a steadfast supporter of education.
- John Williams, Doctor of Music. The world's foremost living composer of film music and a renowned conductor, John Williams has created music that has given voice to American culture for more than four decades.
- Robert Zemeckis, Doctor of Fine Arts. A USC alumnus and award-winning director renowned for his innovative blending of technological wizardry and insightful storytelling, Robert Zemeckis has revolutionized filmmaking and established new standards of artistic excellence.

May, 2004

- John McCain, Doctor of Humane Letters. Legislator and military hero; has distinguished himself through his military service in Vietnam and his national leadership as a two-term member of Congress and a three-term United States Senator. Mr. McCain delivered the commencement address.
- Edward Witten, Doctor of Science. Renowned mathematical physicist; has distinguished himself as a major contributor to the field of theoretical physics.

May, 2003

- Wallis Annenberg, Doctor of Humane Letters. USC trustee, vice president of the Annenberg Foundation; has distinguished herself as an exemplary philanthropist, a champion of educational opportunities particularly for women and children, and a lifelong friend of USC.
- Mary Ellen Avery, Doctor of Science. Renowned physician, scientist, and neonatologist; has distinguished herself as an advocate for children through her groundbreaking scientific discoveries on respiratory disease in newborn babies.
- Joseph Medicine Crow, Doctor of Humane Letters. USC alumnus (M.S. '39) and tribal historian of the Crow Indian Tribe; has distinguished himself as a scholar of Indian tribal history and anthropology throughout his life.
- Ruth Simmons, Doctor of Humane Letters. President of Brown University, is a distinguished scholar and university administrator. Former associate dean of the Graduate School at USC, Dr. Simmons has served as vice provost for Princeton University and president of Smith College before assuming the presidency at Brown University. Dr. Simmons delivered the commencement address.