

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**REQUEST TO AWARD AN HONORARY DOCTOR OF HUMANE LETTERS DEGREE
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA**

Action Requested: Consider approval of the request by the University of Northern Iowa to award an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree to Constantine "Deno" William Curris at Fall 2016 or Spring 2017 Commencement.

Executive Summary: The University of Northern Iowa wishes to recognize Dr. Curris for his distinguished career in higher education.

Details on Dr. Curris's Accomplishments:

- ❖ Dr. Curris was born in Lexington, Kentucky, and attended the University of Kentucky where he graduated Magna Cum Laude in Political Science in 1962. Dr. Curris earned a Master of Arts degree in Political Science from the University of Illinois, with an emphasis in Public Administration and an Ed.D. in Higher Education from the University of Kentucky in 1967.
- ❖ Dr. Curris began his career in 1965 as Vice President and Dean of Faculty at Midway College in Kentucky, moving in 1968 to West Virginia to serve as director of academic programs for the West Virginia Board of Education. After serving at Marshall University as Dean of Students and at West Virginia Institute of Technology as Vice President and Dean of Faculty, he was selected as the 6th President of Murray State University in 1973.
- ❖ In 1983, Dr. Curris became the 7th President at the University of Northern Iowa. During his tenure, he worked to improve UNI's visual appeal including the restoration of several buildings on campus, led the construction of new facilities, including the Kamerick Art Building, the Center for Energy and Environmental Education, and the Business Building (now the Curris Business Building), and brought the campus national recognition for the high quality of the business and education programs.
- ❖ At UNI, Dr. Curris was focused on quality undergraduate programs, teacher education reform, economic reform and development, and expanded opportunities in international studies. Under his tenure, UNI had a record enrollment in 1991. He was also instrumental in starting the Master of Public Policy program in 1991 believing it to be a "niche program that would train folks in advanced policy analysis."
- ❖ In 1995, after leading UNI for 12 years, Dr. Curris left to become the 13th President of Clemson University, serving from 1995 to 1999.
- ❖ From 1999 to 2009, Dr. Curris served as President of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), the organization that oversees more than 400 public colleges and universities.
- ❖ While serving as President of AASCU, he advocated for over 15 million students and focused his efforts on public college accountability. His work on the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) Program allowed the public to compare universities on student and family information, student engagement as well as student learning.

- ❖ Dr. Curris' retirement from AASCU in 2008 allowed him the opportunity to serve Murray State University once again as a member of the Board of Regents and eventually as chair.
- ❖ Currently, Dr. Curris offers his four decades of higher education leadership and experience to AGB Search where he focuses on finding leaders in higher education to serve on governing boards and in presidential and chancellorship positions.
- ❖ According to those who recommended him for an honorary degree, Dr. Curris was very persuasive and politically astute, especially with state leaders whose support of public universities was needed in the 1980s and 1990s. Deno Curris "put a face on UNI with the Iowa legislature and was able to demonstrate and explain to legislators, including legislative leadership, why UNI is a crown jewel for Iowa." Perhaps the best description of the lasting legacy of Dr. Curris is given by another recommender: "President Curris presided with keen intellect, ethical authority, and mordant wit. His sense of the appropriate and the progressive flowed through all areas of university life, from the curriculum to the landscaping and food services."
- ❖ The University of Northern Iowa wishes to recognize Dr. Curris for his extraordinary accomplishments with an honorary degree.