

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

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

**Action Requested:** Consider approval of the request by the University of Iowa to award an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree to Richard (Dick) Myers at Spring 2011 Commencement.

**Executive Summary:** The University of Iowa wishes to recognize Mr. Myers for his exceptional contributions to public service and the advancement of educational opportunities at the University.

**Details on Mr. Myers's Accomplishments:**

- ◇ Mr. Myers was born in Iowa City and educated at the University of Iowa, Iowa State University, and Kirkwood Community College. His background gave him first-hand experience of the power of higher education to transform people's lives.
- ◇ Following his military service with the U.S. Army, he returned to his home town to found Hawk I Harley Davidson and Hawk I Truck Stop, two popular and successful businesses. From this experience, he has been able to articulate the importance of small businesses as drivers of economic activity and public well-being. He keenly understands the interface of the private and public sectors.
- ◇ Mr. Myers' 40-year public career includes his service as a member of the Coralville City Council, Mayor of Coralville, Iowa State Director of the Farmers Home Administration, member of the Johnson County Board of Supervisors, Board member of the Mid-Eastern Council on Chemical Abuse (MECCA), member of the Board of Directors of the Sixth Judicial District, member and chairman of the Iowa City Area Development Group, and member of the Iowa City Chamber of Commerce.
- ◇ In 1994, Mr. Myers was elected to the Iowa House of Representatives in a special election and served many terms, eventually becoming House Minority Leader. His effectiveness as a legislator was significant because he gained the trust and respect of both Democrats and Republicans. In addition to his support of education, Mr. Myers extended his knowledge, interest, and passion to such issues as business, agriculture, and local government. He was able to integrate many vitally important areas of life instead of seeing them in conflict.
- ◇ Throughout his career in the Iowa House of Representatives, Mr. Myers supported and represented higher education with distinction, sometimes during challenging conditions, including advocating maximizing higher education spending at a time of unprecedented budget cuts. The mission of a public research university is complex, and without the public, visible support of Mr. Myers and others like him, the state universities would not be able to make the case for public support as effectively. He understands all aspects of public higher education, effectively arguing for its importance in creating pathways to middle class incomes, economic and cultural opportunity, and civic responsibility. Mr. Myers has been proactive in support for the University of Iowa.

- ◇ As House Minority Leader, Mr. Myers analyzed the demographics of teacher retirements and articulated the need to address the issue before it became a severe statewide problem. He explained the reasons for a justifiable difference in the costs of educating students in universities, K-12 schools, and community colleges. Mr. Myers was an advocate of the Iowa fiber optic network that helped support innovations in classrooms. He was also an advocate for scientific research and, when necessary, argued for its support.
- ◇ Mr. Myers has shared his time generously with students at the University of Iowa. He has spoken with many classes, helping students understand the connections between what happens in the statehouse and what happens in local communities. As a legislator, he always made time to be a class speaker, even on short notice and with a busy schedule. He always engaged students in substantive and honest dialogue, showing his commitment to developing a new generation of Iowa leaders.
- ◇ After his service in the legislature, Mr. Myers has continued to advocate on behalf of higher education. The trust, respect, and relationships that he built with legislators and members of executive branch agencies have helped the University of Iowa on such issues as general operating funding, capital projects, and operational priorities.
- ◇ Not only has Mr. Myers supported education at the University of Iowa and throughout the state, he has also served as a role model about the opportunities and obligations to act in the public interest. Throughout his years in elected office, he never lost sight of the main reason he was in public service – to ensure the betterment of the community as a whole. He has served as an outstanding example of integrity, leadership, and common sense in public service and civic participation, worthy of being honored and emulated.