Contact: Rachel Boon

REQUEST TO AWARD AN HONORARY DEGREE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Committee Action Requested: Consider approval of the request by the University of Iowa to award an honorary Doctorate to Mr. Dana Kolpin at Spring 2027 commencement.

Details of Mr. Kolpin's Accomplishments: The University of Iowa enthusiastically requests approval to award an honorary Doctor of Science degree to Dana Kolpin, a U.S. Geological Survey research hydrologist and University of Iowa alumnus whose scholarship has transformed the understanding of water quality in Iowa and around the world. Mr. Kolpin exemplifies scientific innovation, public service and educational commitment befitting this honor, and he is recommended without reservation.

Mr. Kolpin earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Iowa State University in 1984 and a Master of Science degree in geology from the University of Iowa in 1988. He has served with the U.S. Geological Survey since 1984, advancing from hydrologic technician to research hydrologist and leading major national initiatives focused on contaminants of emerging concern and the connections among agriculture, water resources, food systems and human health.

Mr. Kolpin pioneered the study of emerging contaminants, including pharmaceuticals, hormones, pesticides, PFAS, microplastics and other compounds in water systems. His landmark 2002 article documenting pharmaceuticals, hormones and other organic wastewater contaminants in United States' streams fundamentally changed scientific and public understanding of water quality. The study catalyzed a new field of inquiry into trace contaminants and their ecological and human health implications. Throughout his career, he has published more than 300 peer-reviewed papers, demonstrating exceptional productivity, originality and sustained influence.

His work is distinguished by its interdisciplinary and collaborative character. Mr. Kolpin has brought together toxicologists, ecologists, geologists, engineers, chemists, agricultural experts and public health officials to investigate complex environmental challenges. His research has addressed pesticide transport, pharmaceutical pollution, antibiotic resistance, PFAS and contaminants affecting drinking water and aquatic ecosystems. His recent collaborative study of pharmaceutical pollution in rivers worldwide received the Cozzarelli Prize from the National Academy of Sciences for outstanding scientific quality and originality.

Mr. Kolpin has also made significant contributions to education and the University of Iowa. He has advised and mentored graduate students, served on thesis and examination committees, presented seminars and collaborated extensively with university researchers in environmental engineering, geosciences, chemistry and public health. His expertise has supported statewide research on Iowa water ways and informed programs examining environmental contamination and public health. He has also served scientific organizations, government bodies, advisory boards, and professional initiatives addressing urgent national water-quality concerns. His advisory contributions have supported the Iowa Biomonitoring Program, the Center for Health Effects of Environmental Contamination, and research examining pesticides, cancer risk, antibiotic resistance and Iowa water resources.

His achievements have been recognized through the Recipharm International Environmental Award, federal scientific achievement awards, and the University of Iowa's 2022 Earth and Environmental Sciences Distinguished Alumnus Award. These honors reflect the national and international significance of his work and his enduring connection to Iowa.

Awarding Mr. Kolpin an honorary Doctor of Science degree would recognize a pioneering scientist whose discoveries created new avenues of environmental research, strengthened understanding of threats to water quality and benefited communities in Iowa and beyond. It would also honor an alumnus whose career demonstrates the global impact of rigorous scholarship, generous collaboration and sustained public service.