

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**REQUEST TO AWARD 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 Mary Louise Petersen at Spring 2013 Commencement.

Executive Summary: The University of Iowa wishes to recognize Ms. Petersen for her exceptional contributions to higher education governance in Iowa and nationally; for her ongoing dedication to civic leadership; and for her long and distinguished record of service in support of the University of Iowa's mission.

Details on Ms. Petersen's Accomplishments:

- ◇ Ms. Petersen graduated *summa cum laude* in 1951 from the University of Iowa College of Education with a bachelor's degree in science education. As an undergraduate, she was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and served as president of her class and president of the Association of University Women.
- ◇ Ms. Petersen was appointed to the Iowa State Board of Regents (as it was then known) in 1969. Her good judgment and abiding confidence in the mission and integrity of the University helped maintain stability during that tumultuous time for higher education.
- ◇ Ms. Petersen served as president of the Board of Regents from 1973 to 1981. In that role, she effectively articulated the value of the University to the state even during a time of a weakened agricultural economy. She advanced a vision of higher education trusteeship that embraced not just fiduciary responsibility and sound business practices, but also focused on careful nurturing of the academic culture, respect for diverse points of view, and collaboration and partnership. She guided the Board to fulfill its public responsibilities which earned her the respect of the board range of constituencies, including the governor, legislature, students, faculty, staff, university alumni, and citizen of the state.
- ◇ Ms. Petersen received national recognition for her leadership.
 - She was appointed to the Carnegie Foundation Board of Trustees and elected chair of the board of directors of the Association of Governing Boards (AGB) for Colleges and Universities. Through that organization she served as a mentor for boards of trustees across the country.
 - Widely admired for her understanding of higher education finances and for her concern to keep college access affordable, she served as an advisor to the National Association of College and University Business Officers and on the steering committee for an American Council on Education project on the financial indicators of the condition of higher education.
- ◇ Through her national service, Ms. Petersen had a profound impact on higher education across the country. Furthermore, her visibility made her an invaluable ambassador for Iowa.

- ◇ After her service on the Board of Regents, Ms. Petersen continued to volunteer for various local, state, and national organizations. She also remained an important and sustaining friend of the University and the University of Iowa Foundation. She co-chaired the *Good. Better. Best. Iowa*, capital campaign and the Old Capitol Museum campaign. She chaired the President's Club from 1998 to 2004 and served as co-chair for two additional years. She was a member of the University of Iowa Foundation's board of directors from 1991 to 2006 and is now a lifetime honorary director.
- ◇ Ms. Petersen received the state of Iowa's Distinguished Service Award and is a member of the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame.
- ◇ Ms. Petersen and her husband, Rand, have given generously to support the University's programs, especially the Pentacrest museums. Their gifts have made possible the Mary Louise Petersen Chair in Higher Education in the College of Education and the Walter and Margaret Anneberg Scholarship Fund in the Carver College of Medicine.