

**UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN SENATE**  
COMMITTEE ON HONORARY DEGREES  
(Final; Action)

HD.20.10      Nomination for Honorary Degree Awards – Bunch, Ellis

The Senate Committee on Honorary Degrees is pleased to nominate the following individuals for an honorary degree award to be conferred at the May 2020 Commencement exercises:

- Lonnie Bunch
- Jill Ellis

Information relative to the background and achievements of these nominees is attached. Based on the criteria approved by the Senate, the Committee has selected these individuals for Senate consideration.

The Committee wishes to express its sincere appreciation to all who participated in the process, particularly those who spent considerable amounts of time and effort in preparing documentation for these nominees.

COMMITTEE ON HONORARY DEGREES  
Matthew Wheeler, Chair  
Fred Johnson Asiimwe  
Larry Fahnestock  
Ane Icardo Isasa  
Prasanta Kalita  
Susan Koerner



**Lonnie Bunch III**  
**Secretary of the**  
**Smithsonian Institution**

**EDUCATION:**

B.A., American and African American History, American University, 1974

M.A., American and African American History, American University, 1976

*Nominated by: Ronald W. Bailey, Head, Department of African American Studies, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

*Antoinette Burton, Director, Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

**BASIS FOR NOMINATION:**

Lonnie Bunch III made history when he was the first African American named Secretary of the Smithsonian Institutions. In that capacity, he oversees the most prestigious and arguably most comprehensive museum complexes in the world. His portfolio includes 19 museums, 21 libraries, the National Zoo, numerous research centers, and several education units and centers. The Smithsonian, as this complex is commonly referred to, hosts upward of 30 million visitors a year and has an annual budget of \$1.2 million.

Previously, Bunch was the director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture. When he started as director in July 2005, he had one staff member, no collections, no funding and no site for a museum. Driven by optimism, determination and commitment to build "a place that would make America better," Bunch transformed a vision into a bold reality. The museum has welcomed more than 6 million visitors since it opened in September 2016 and compiled a collection of 40,000 objects that are housed in the first "green building" on the National Mall.

**EXCERPT FROM THE NOMINATION LETTER:**

"While Lonnie Bunch was introduced to most people when he was named as Secretary of the Smithsonian, he was well-known to many others as one of the many scholars and museum specialists who have labored long and hard in the vineyards of the nation's museum community. In his capacity as historian and educator, he has been in the museum business for practically his entire career, including years of service in Illinois. From 1983 to 1989, Bunch worked as a curator and then as director at the California African American Museum. He has moved back and forth across the U.S. ever since. While he has had deep ties to the Smithsonian across the years – he was a curator at the National Museum of American History from 1989-1994 – among his most influential stints was as president of the Chicago Historical Society from 2000 to 2005. Now known as the Chicago History Museum, it is one of the oldest museums in the country. In addition to overseeing dynamic and innovative exhibitions and stewarding the organization's vast and diverse holdings of material related to urban midwestern life, Bunch ran a capital campaign that has enabled the museum to remain a leading local, regional, and national institution."

## HONORS/AWARDS (NOT INCLUSIVE):

2002	Committee for Preservation of the White House
2005	100 Most Influential Museum Professionals of the 20 <sup>th</sup> Century, American Association of Museums
2010	Committee for the Preservation of the White House
2019	Freedom Medal, Roosevelt Institute

## EXCERPTS FROM THE LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION:

*James Grossman, Executive Director, American Historical Association*

“That relationship between scholarship and professional and public culture, defines who Lonnie Bunch is as a historian. And he is, first and foremost, a distinguished historian. Not a black historian, not a public historian — a historian. And a historian who has considered the museum a venue for scholarship as rigorous and provocative as a scholarly journal or university press book. Working on projects with Lonnie when he was president of the Chicago Historical Society taught me how in the right hands, with the right sense of mission and audience, a museum could fuse what we normally think of as the educational province of the classroom and the scholarly space of academic research.

*Frederick E. Hoxie, Professor Emeritus, Department of History, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

“Lonnie Bunch has many achievements in his resume, but his greatest accomplishment, in my view, is his success not only in shepherding the National Museum of African American History and Culture through to completion, but in completing the task in such a way that it amplified the public’s appreciation of the institution’s mission. Becoming Secretary of the Smithsonian is of course his greatest triumph, but the regents’ decision to select him reflected their recognition of his leadership and vision as well as his success with a new museum. That leadership proved far more appealing than steady service in the Smithsonian bureaucracy. Bunch is a man of our time; one who understands the rich diversity of America – and the deep divisions and hurt that diversity has produced – yet who continues to be an advocate of comity, curiosity and a shared commitment to common past. These are exactly the qualities the University of Illinois should be holding up to its students and alumni at events such as commencement.”

*Earl Lewis, Director, Center for Social Solutions, University of Michigan*

“But if there is a reason to single out Lonnie Bunch, it is for the extraordinary job he did in turning an idea that first surfaced in 1915 into a tangible national asset. Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century African Americans called for a museum on the national mall that captured and expertly showcased the African American experience in and contribution to the nation. For nearly a century requests from Congress to authorize such a construction were ignored and deferred.

Eventually the opposition softened and the effort needed a leader. In 2005 Bunch was lured away from his job heading the Chicago Historical Society. He had been asked to transform an idea for a museum into the National Museum of African American History and Culture. Congress committed land but no resources. Bunch first had to assemble a management team. Then he had to build an advisory board, develop a concept for a museum on the mall, convince donors big and small to contribute, find an architect, assemble artifacts, and open. That he did so by September 2016 is a testament to all of his skills. He found others inspired by his vision for a museum, staff willing to serve, advisory members who gave and got financial support for the museum. And, ultimately, he found donors as committed as he to its opening.”

Jill Ellis  
Development Director  
United States Soccer Federation

EDUCATION:

B.A., English Literature and Composition, College of William & Mary, 1988

*Nominated by: Robert Markley, Head, Department of English, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

BASIS FOR NOMINATION:

Jill Ellis is an exemplary leader and one of the most celebrated soccer coaches in the world. She is the winningest coach in U.S. soccer history and the only person to win back-to-back Women's World Cups. She has also used her athletics platform to champion efforts to close the gender pay gap and to celebrate LGBTQ inclusion. Illinois gave Ellis her first head coaching position in the first year we had a women's soccer program.

EXCERPT FROM THE NOMINATION LETTER:

"Ellis has said she credits her English degree with providing her insights into people and culture, and with the analytical skills she needed to relate to her teammates and to coach at the highest levels in her sport. Though her path had not been a traditional one for those who graduate as English majors, Ellis is an example of the power of English literature to prepare students for any career they wish to pursue.

Ellis was inducted into the William & Mary Athletics Hall of Fame in 2002, was named a William & Mary Tribe Champion for Life in 2015, and was honored as their 2018 Alumni Medallion. She also has an honorary doctorate from that institution. Off the field, Ellis has emerged as an advocate for addressing the gender gap, pushing for equal pay for equal work. After the 2019 USWNT win, several of her players brought renewed attention to the disparities between the salaries they made and those made by the U.S. Men's team, despite the latter's comparative lack of success internationally. Ellis was able to navigate her role as an employee of U.S. Soccer, while also supporting and inspiring her players to stand up for their rights. She has also been a role model for LGBTQ athletes by championing inclusion on her teams.

Ellis has had a tremendously successful athletics career. But more importantly, she has used her career to elevate issues that matter to her and her players that have broad social implications."

HONORS/AWARDS (NOT INCLUSIVE):

1987	Third-Team All-American, College of William & Mary
2000	NSCAA National Coach of the Year
2008	Olympic Gold Medal, Beijing
2014	CONCACAF Women's Championship (1 <sup>st</sup> place)
2015	Algarve Cup (1 <sup>st</sup> place)
2015	FIFA Women's World Cup
2015	CONCACAF Women's Coach of the Year
2015	FIFA World Women's Coach of the Year
2019	FIFA Women's World Cup
2019	FIFA World Women's Coach of the Year

EXCERPTS FROM THE LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION:

*Carlos A. Cordeiro, President, U.S. Soccer Federation*

“Jill’s commitment, passion and unrivaled achievement across two decades has inspired millions of players, coaches and fans in the United States and around the world, raising the profile of the women’s game globally and setting the standard for future generations.

Specifically, Jill has devoted 20 years of outstanding service to leading Women’s and Girls’ National Team programs at U.S. Soccer, including as Development Director for U.S. Soccer and head coach for numerous women’s Youth National Teams.

With this most recent championship, Jill became the first coach in history to win two Women’s World Cup titles, leading the U.S. Women’s National Team to an unprecedented four titles. Not only has she coached the most games in the history of the U.S. Women’s National Team, but with an overall record of 106-7-19, she also has the most wins of any coach in the team’s history.”

*Julie Foudy, ESPN Analyst and Reporter, Former Captain US Women’s Soccer Team, 2x Olympic Gold Medalist, 2x World Cup Champion*

“She has recently completed the most successful tenure of any head coach at the women’s national team level, having won back-to-back World Cups as the head coach of the US women’s soccer team in 2015 and again in 2019. In winning back-to-back World Cup titles, she became only the second coach ever to do that. You have to go all the way back to the 1930s (the 1934 and 1938 World Cups) to find Vittorio Pozzo, the Italian men’s coach, as the only other coach to accomplish such a feat.

Jill retired from the US head coaching position on Oct 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019, as the winningest coach in US women’s soccer history. She finished her stellar career with a 106-7-19 record. She also finished her career having coached 132 international games, more than any US Women’s National Team Coach in history. Remarkably, she went undefeated in World Cup qualifying and World Cup games with a 23-0-1 record. Jill was also selected as The Best FIFA Women’s Coach in 2019, which she also won in 2015.”

*Josh Whitman, Director of Athletics, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

“Jill is a former student-athlete, a nationally and internationally renowned coach who remains the winningest coach in United States Soccer history, and a two-time world champion. Her career on the soccer field is beyond compare.

While Jill’s on-field accomplishments speak for themselves, her influence extends far beyond the pitch. She has developed meaningful relationships with hundreds of people she has competed with and against, and she is a valuable leader within U.S. Soccer and its many related organizations. As a proud member of the LGBTQ community, Jill and, by extension, her teams have become strong advocates and models for inclusion. She has used her platform to do good in many corners of American society and abroad.”

*Janet Rayfield, Illinois Women’s Soccer Head Coach, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

“Jill has shown the world how to bring together a diverse and driven group of women, surround them with talented people focused not on themselves but on the team, and create a synergistic, passionate, joyful team that achieved all they set out to and more. The players were given the freedom to be themselves and leveraged their differences to find success on and off the field.

Jill also empowered those players to not only be decision makers on the field but to use their platform as sports icons to make a positive impact on the world. She created an environment of courage, and inspiration for athletes to forge new pathways for themselves and to open doors that other women can now walk through. Women in all walks of life have seen these women, their success, their mentality, their courage and their confidence and been encouraged and motivated to forge ahead along their own journeys. Journeys of equality, journeys of leadership and journeys of personal growth and courage have been witnessed around the world with credit being given to the women of the US Women’s National Team. Jill Ellis, the leader, the example, the unifier, the team-builder, made those stories possible.”