

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN SENATE

COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES

(Final; Action)

CC.26.17 Election of **Faculty Members** to the Ad Hoc Committee on the Honorary Degree Awards Process**BACKGROUND**

The Ad Hoc Committee on the Honorary Degree Awards Process will examine the current honorary degree awards process and determine if the process is efficient, effective, and appropriately balances faculty engagement with the University's need. The Committee will also ensure the process for granting honorary degree awards reflects best practices and maintains consistency with the University's mission and values.

Excerpt from the *Statutes*, Article II, Section 1.

d. Each senate shall recommend candidates for honorary degrees...

The Committee will advise the Senate on the process of discharging this obligation and will make recommendations to the Senate through the Senate Executive Committee to strengthen the process for the future, ensuring it continues to reflect academic excellence and the University's highest standards.

As stated in SC.26.04, the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) Vice-Chair will serve as Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee, and the current Chair of the Senate Committee on Honorary Degrees will serve as a member.

DESIGNATED FACULTY MEMBERS

Senate Executive Committee Vice-Chair

Shawn Gilmore, *Chair*

Chair of the Senate Committee on Honorary Degrees

Prasanta Kalita

NOMINATIONS

The Committee on Committees present the following nominees to serve as **faculty members** to the Ad Hoc Committee on the Honorary Degree Awards Process. Submitted interest statements from nominees are attached.

Jason Chambers

MDA

Jon Hale

EDUC

Pollyanna Rhee

FAA

Matthew Wheeler

ENGR

Nominees shall be elected in accordance with the approved election procedures in SC.26.04.

1. Each senator may cast up to two (2) votes.
2. The two (2) nominees receiving the highest number of votes are elected, with at most one (1) from any single college or similar division.

Additional nominations by faculty senators may be made from the floor and must be accompanied by the nominee's willingness to serve if elected. Each nominee must be a member of the faculty electorate as defined in [Article II of the Senate Constitution](#). A statement of interest limited to 200 words is also requested.

COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES
Chaya Sandler, Chair
Kent Choquette
Sohan Hajra
Linda Herrera
Gal Hochman
Tania Ionin
Bernhard Scully
Michelle Gornicki, *ex officio*
Jenny Roether, *ex officio*

STATEMENTS OF INTEREST

Jason Chambers (Professor, MDA)

Jason P. Chambers is Professor in the Charles H. Sandage Department of Advertising and serves as the College of Media's Associate Dean for Access and Engagement. His teaching and research focus on the history of advertising, and he has published three books about African American men and women in the advertising industry. Chambers is active in service and faculty governance initiatives at the department, college, and university level. He earned a Ph.D. in History from Ohio State and has been a faculty member at Illinois since 2001.

Jon Hale (Professor, EDUC)

Dr. Jon Hale is a professor of education and educational history. Hale has represented the College of Education in the faculty senate since he joined the University of Illinois in 2020, including serving as Chair and Vice-Chair of the Senate Executive Committee (2023-2025). He is currently a member of the Senate HD and EQ committees. His academic research focuses on the history of student activism and the intersection of race and educational policy. He explores this in five authored and co-edited books, including his award-winning book, *The Freedom Schools*. His service to the wider community is connected broadly to justice-centered initiatives including the Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools®.

Pollyanna Rhee (Assistant Professor, FAA)

Pollyanna Rhee is an environmental and landscape historian and Assistant Professor in the Department of Landscape Architecture and is currently a Beckman Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study. She has served as senator for her department since 2021 and on the Committee for Honorary Degrees since 2022.

Matthew Wheeler (Professor, ENGR)

Matthew B. Wheeler is Professor at UIUC. He served as Chair of the Athletic Board from 1999-2002 and was one of the Faculty Representatives to the Big Ten Conference and NCAA from 2002-2018. Dr. Wheeler served on UIUC Senate Committees on Admissions, Conference on Conduct Governance, General University Policy and Chair of the Honorary Degrees Committee from 2016-2020. Dr. Wheeler was elected to University Senates Conference in 2008, serving as Chair in 2010-11. He served as the USC representative to the UIUC Senate Executive Committee and was elected SEC Vice Chair in 2009-2011 and SEC Chair 2011-2013. He was named University Scholar (2002) and an AAAS Fellow (2024). Dr. Wheeler's awards include the 2016 Distinguished Faculty Leadership Award, the 2024 Graduate Mentoring and Teaching Award and the 2024 ASAS Animal Physiology and Endocrinology Award. His fields of professional interest are embryonic and adult stem cells, tissue engineering and regenerative medicine. As Chair of the Honorary Degrees Committee, he saw some inequities and flaws in the system. He is interested in serving on this Ad Hoc Committee as he believes the system can be modified to increase fairness for the nominees, improve transparency, and maintain faculty input and faculty governance.