

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN SENATE

Committee on Honorary Degrees
(Final; Action)

HD.19.05 Nominations for Honorary Degrees

The Senate Committee on Honorary Degrees is pleased to nominate the following individuals for an honorary degree to be conferred at the May 2019 Commencement exercises:

- Michael T. Aiken

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
Elvira Demejia
Larry Fahnestock
Ane Icardo Isasa
Thomas Nevins
Rolando Romero
Antonio Sanchez

Michael T. Aiken

Retired Chancellor

EDUCATION: A.B., Sociology, University of Mississippi, 1954
M.A., University of Michigan, 1955
Ph.D., University of Michigan, 1964

Nominated by:

James D. Anderson, Dean, College of Education, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Feng Sheng Hu, Harry S. Preble Dean of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Yoon Kyung Pak, Interim Head, Department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Brian Dill, Department Head, Department of Sociology, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

BASIS FOR NOMINATION:

As the sixth chancellor of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Michael T. Aiken provided strong, visionary leadership that laid a foundation for regular and transparent strategic planning, robust philanthropic support of faculty, experiential learning for students and support for translational research as an engine of economic development for the state. Chancellor Aiken, a highly regarded sociologist, explored organizations as social and political domains, focusing on alienation and the integration of workers, especially in matters of race and age. His later research emphasized the importance of looking at organizations not only in terms of internal processes, but also within the context of the wider society in which they existed and the history through which they evolved. He firmly believed that organizations were capable of dynamic growth and change. All of this came to inform his increasingly prominent roles as a university administrator, where he brought his theoretical knowledge to bear at departmental, college and institutional levels. These ideas, put into action at Illinois, strengthened its foundation as it entered the 21st century, equipping it to face an era of uncertain funding, changing demographics and new expectations.

EXCERPT FROM THE NOMINATION LETTER:

Chancellor Aiken was the sixth chancellor of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, leading the campus from 1993 until his retirement in 2001. Only one chancellor has served longer.

Drawn by the strength of this institution, Dr. Aiken also believed that the student experience and the faculty work environment could be improved, and he undertook many initiatives to accomplish his goals. Several of them have become so much a part of the Illinois experience that few may remember how and when they started. Among his accomplishments:

- Framework for the Future
- Endowed Chairs and Professorships
- Study Abroad
- Living/Learning Communities
- Research Park
- Discovery Classes
- Freshman Convocation
- Campustown 2000
- Campus Beautification
- Remodeling and Construction

EXCERPTS FROM THE LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION:

Stanley O. Ikenberry, Professor and President Emeritus, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

“Michael Aiken came to Illinois with roots grounded in Mississippi, with leadership experience from his days at Penn, and extensive experience at other great public universities, Michigan and Wisconsin. For Illinois, Michael’s perspective was fresh and invigorating. Michael helped craft a clearer strategic vision, sharpened the focus and lifted the priority of undergraduate education, led the expansion of research capacity and programs and forged meaningful relationships between town and gown.”

Richard Schacht, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy and Jubilee Professor of Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

“Another aspect in which Aiken was exemplary was his stance on the matter of “shared governance.” For him this did not simply mean: shared between higher administrators and the Trustees. It meant shared between administration and faculty, as represented by the Senate in particular. And he did not simply go along with it. He believed in it, and was a committed partner with the Senate in strengthening shared governance on our campus. This is a significant part of his legacy.

Aiken was not only someone with higher-educational administrative knowledge and abilities. He also was a genuine academic, from a significant discipline; and he further was imbued with a real commitment to the values that are at the very heart of our three-fold land-grant mission of teaching, research, and service. He never lost sight of these values, and of what their realization entailed; and he worked to ensure that they all were enhanced, rather than short-changed under pressures (financial, political, or trendy) to compromise them.”

Richard F. Wilson, President Emeritus, Illinois Wesleyan University

“I marveled at Chancellor Aiken’s organizational skills in putting together Framework for the Future, a strategic plan for the campus. There were two aspects of the planning process that I found compelling. First, the plan was developed in a very decentralized way with the help of a number of councils and committees. He had an abiding confidence that the faculty and staff would create a plan that was compelling and would provide the right direction for the future. It was a complex process but one that he knew was essential for the results to be legitimate and impactful.

Second, he worked tirelessly to ensure that the plan was a “living document”, one that would guide decision making, particularly in terms of resource allocation. Every element of the plan was assigned to a member of his leadership team and each one was asked to report on progress regularly. These process considerations were important but only to the extent that the plan yielded results.

A second major contribution made by Chancellor Aiken related to Campaign Illinois, a hugely successful fund-raising campaign that occurred during his tenure. ... Chancellor Aiken knew that many elements of the strategic plan would require that resources be secured from other sources, particularly our alumni and friends.

He worked tirelessly on behalf of the University and had a significant impact on the success of the campaign. Our original target of \$700 million was increased to \$1 billion, a goal that was easily surpassed. As impressive as the numbers were, the real impact of the campus can be traced to its effect on people, programs, and facilities. The campaign was instrumental to the strategic plan and facilitated many of the elements listed above. One result, in particular, deserves special mention: the dramatic increase in the number of endowed chairs and professorships.”

Larry R. Faulkner, President Emeritus, The University of Texas at Austin

“His period of leadership at Illinois was marked by outstanding achievements, including the success of the first billion-dollar fundraising campaign, the establishment of the first endowed chairs and professorships, and a collegially developed budget-reform initiative that gave the University an important basis for managing through the much tougher years a decade later.

But perhaps most impressive of all was his patient attention to an improved campus environment, especially including neighboring zones outside the University’s control. Chancellor Aiken’s work eventually led to improvements that scarcely could have been imagined at the time I left the University in 1998. All of the improvements in neighboring areas had to be accomplished through vision, persuasion, trust, and personal relationships built over years. Almost none came from his executive authority or from financial resources under the University’s control. The legacy is important. These improvements will provide decades of benefit toward the recruitment and retention of students, faculty, and staff, even beyond the continuing benefit for the daily life of people in the University community.”