

TO: Chair Nolan Miller and Members of the Ninth Senate Review Commission

DATE: July 23, 2026

RE: SC.26.25, SEC Response to the Ninth Senate Review Commission's (SR9) Review of the Honorary Degree Award Process (SR.26.01)

Dear Chair Miller and Members of the Ninth Senate Review Commission,

Thank you for responding to the request of the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) to conduct a review of the honorary degree award process. On behalf of the SEC, I want to thank the members of the Commission for their service and for their thoughtful report. Below, we summarize SEC's review process and provide feedback for the Commission's consideration.

Process

The SEC received the *Ninth Senate Review Commission's (SR9) Review of the Honorary Degree Award Process (SR.26.01)* on February 27, 2026. The report was shared with SEC at its March 2, 2026 meeting. SEC members were subsequently asked to review the report, with discussion occurring at that meeting and continuing at the March 30, April 20, May 18, and June 15 meetings. SEC members had numerous opportunities to review the report and share their thoughts.

In particular, the June 15 and July 13 meetings included lengthy and productive discussion of SR9's report and recommendations on the Senate's honorary degree process. The feedback below reflects the discussion.

Summary of Feedback

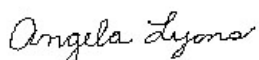
SEC's feedback on the report and its recommendations are summarized below.

1. All SEC members but one prefer Model A, viewing it as a recommendation to create a joint governance body — similar in structure to *JACILNR* (Joint Advisory Committee on Investment, Licensing, and Naming Rights) — through which the Senate would fully delegate (rather than partially delegate, as under Model B) the honorary degree recommendation process. The general sentiment is that vetting individual candidates for honorary degrees is a duty best carried out by a smaller body that can focus and dedicate its time to vetting candidates.
2. SEC members would like to see the *Statutes* clarified regarding how the Senate shall carry out its duty to recommend candidates for honorary degrees. Discussion centered on the following draft language:

- *Each senate, according to a process stipulated in its Bylaws, shall recommend candidates for honorary degrees and shall determine for its university the manner in which the faculty shall recommend to the chancellor/vice president candidates for earned degrees, diplomas, and certificates to be conferred by the president or designee under the authority of the Board of Trustees.*
 - *Each senate, according to criteria and processes stipulated in its Bylaws, shall recommend to the chancellor/vice president candidates for honorary degrees to be conferred by the president or designee, upon approval by the Board of Trustees.*
3. SEC members would like to see the Senate establish guidelines and governance rules pertaining to the formation and composition of the joint governance body. One suggestion was that the Senate submit to the Chancellor a list of nominees reflecting a defined set of characteristics to help ensure representativeness and expertise. SEC would like the committee to represent as many points of view as possible and to be initially chaired by someone familiar with the history of the process. SEC recommends the Senate discuss this during the 2026-27 session.
 4. SEC would also like the joint governance body (or SEC/Senate) to develop a clear process and set of criteria for recommending candidates — for example, requiring more substantive support from units earlier in the process and/or requiring a supermajority vote from the joint governance body (e.g., two-thirds) before a candidate can move forward as a recommendation to the Chancellor.
 5. SEC members would like a clear process for reporting outcomes back to the Senate. Members suggested this take the form of a report for information to the Senate, which would preserve senators' right to disagree with the committee's recommendation or put forward a resolution.
 6. SEC members recommend that the SEC or Senate conduct a formal evaluation and review of the honorary degrees process every 3–5 years.

Thank you again to the Commission for its service. This response is being shared with SR9 and with the incoming 2026-27 SEC, and will be presented to the Senate as a report for information at its first Fall meeting.

Respectfully submitted,



Angela Lyons
Chair, Senate Executive Committee
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

CC: 2025-2026 Senate Executive Committee Members; 2026-2027 Senate Executive Committee Members; 2026-2027 Senate; Chancellor Charles L. Isbell, Jr., Provost John Coleman