

Honorary Degree Policy

Policy Number:

Category:

Policy Statement:

1. The Garden City Community College (GCCC) policy provides a means to recognize and honor extraordinary individuals whose extraordinary achievements have set a standard that distinguishes them and benefits the institution and the communities it serves, as well as society. The purpose of awarding honorary degrees includes:
 - a. To honor people whose careers reflect sustained and superlative achievement in the arts and professions, research, scholarship, public service, leadership, volunteerism, and/or cultural affairs, as well as new frontiers of human endeavor.
 - b. To advance the educational missions, goals, and programs of GCCC by developing associations with people who embody the same ideals, values, and aspirations
 - c. To inspire students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, and members of the local, national, and world communities to emulate such standards of excellence, integrity, and commitment to enhance the public good.
 - d. The honorary degree should enhance – not overshadow- the student celebration.

Policy Procedures:

Core Criteria

- A. Alignment with Institutional Mission
 - a. Demonstrates commitment to access, equity, workforce development, or transfer education
 - b. Embodies the values of community colleges: opportunity, affordability, student success
 - c. Serves as a role model for non-traditional, first-generation, or career-changing students
- B. Distinguished Achievement
 - a. Candidate has achieved notable distinction in one or more of the following:
 - i. Professional excellence (business, healthcare, public service, trades, education, arts, STEM)
 - ii. Community leadership and civic engagement

- iii. Philanthropy or sustained service
 - iv. Innovation that benefits local or regional communities
 - v. Achievement should be substantial and sustained (not a single accomplishment)
- C. Community Impact
- a. Demonstrated positive impact on the college's service area
 - b. Active involvement in local initiatives, boards, nonprofits, or workforce partnerships
 - c. Evidence of improving lives, expanding opportunities, or strengthening the regional economy
- D. Ethical Standing and Character
- a. High Standards of integrity and professionalism
 - b. No history of conduct that would bring reputational risk to the institution
- E. Connection to GCCC (Preferred, Not Required)
- a. Alumna/Alumnus
 - b. Longtime supporter or partner
 - c. Advisory board member
 - d. Employer of graduates
 - e. Advocate for community college education
- F. Additional Considerations
- a. Reflects a broad range of experiences and communities connected to the institution
 - b. Reflects the diversity of the student body
 - c. Brings diverse professional and/or life experiences
 - d. Help students see themselves as future leaders

NOMINATIONS

- A. Submitting a Nomination
- a. Nominators are asked to submit the following information about the nominee to the President or Vice President of Student Services
 - i. Full name of nominee
 - ii. Biographical sketch of nominee (achievements, distinguishments, community connections, etc.)
 - iii. Statement regarding how the nominee meets one or more of the criteria
 - iv. Explanation of nominee's relevance to GCCC
 - v. Other optional information (if helpful)

SELECTION CRITERIA

- A. The honorary degree is distinctive and will be awarded only in exceptional circumstances.
- B. An individual may receive only one honorary degree from GCCC.
- C. Current faculty and staff members are not eligible.
- D. Former faculty and staff members who have been separated from the GCCC for at least two (2) years are eligible.
- E. Current elected and/or appointed public officials are not eligible.
- F. Current candidates and/or nominees for public elective and/or appointed offices are not eligible.
- G. Current or prospective benefactors of GCCC are not eligible unless they meet the criteria outlined in Section **1.a** of this policy.

HONORARY DEGREE AWARDED

- A. The honorary degree to be awarded will include one of the following:
 - a. Associate in Science Degree
 - b. Associate in Arts Degree

SELECTION COMMITTEE

- A. The selection committee for the award will be composed of the following:
 - a. Vice President for Student Services
 - b. Dean of Student Services
 - c. Executive Director of Enrollment Management
 - d. Registrar
 - e. Director of Financial Aid
 - f. Director of Admissions
 - g. Faculty Senate President
 - h. Faculty Senate Vice President
 - i. Dean of Advancement and Alumni Relations
- B. The committee should use intense scrutiny of a nominee to ensure the continued integrity of the award process. The recipient must attend the Commencement ceremony to be awarded the honorary degree.

PRESIDENTIAL AUTHORITY AND NOTIFICATION

- A. The authority to award honorary degrees resides with the President
- B. The President must approve any nominee for the honorary degree
- C. The President will notify the Vice President of Student Services of the selected recipient(s) of the honorary degree for review by the Selection Committee. The Vice President will review the recommended nominees for compliance with this policy and corresponding GCCC policies and forward the selected recommendation to the President.
- D. Upon approval by the President, the President will notify the recipient.
- E. The Office of the President will notify the Registrar and Public Relations and Marketing Office. Effort will be coordinated for the Commencement ceremony regarding the presentation for and biography of the recipient.

GRADUATION PROCESSES

- A. Commencement Ceremony Assignment
 - a. The honorary degree recipient will be acknowledged at either the Transfer Commencement Ceremony or the Technical Commencement Ceremony, as determined by the College.
- B. Seating Arrangements
 - a. Reserved seating will be provided for the honorary degree recipient and their invited family members. This seating will be located behind the graduating students in a designated area.
- C. Presentation of the Honorary Degree
 - a. The honorary degree recipient will be called to the stage at the beginning of the ceremony to receive the honorary diploma. Following the presentation, the recipient will return to their reserved seating area for the remainder of the ceremony.
- D. Coordination and Protocol
 - a. The College will coordinate all logistical details related to the recipient's participation, including seating, stage access, and timing, to ensure a dignified and seamless recognition during the ceremony.

POLICY HISTORY

March 16, 2026: Approved