WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
ITEM SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

TO: Members of the Board of Trustees
FROM: President Sabah Randhawa
DATE: February 14, 2020
SUBJECT: Approval of Honorary Degree at Spring 2020 Commencement
PURPOSE: Action Item

Purpose of Submittal:

To approve the awarding of an honorary doctorate degree at Spring 2020 Commencement to Denis Hayes, President and CEO of the Bullitt Foundation, Environmental Advocacy Leader, and Co-founder of Earth Day.

Background:

Western Washington University has been given authority by the Washington State Legislature to grant honorary doctoral degrees in recognition of outstanding achievement in arts, letters, sciences, or the professions, or in recognition of service in education, government or humanitarian endeavors. Western's honorary degrees are awarded not only to recognize extraordinary accomplishments, particularly those which resonate with Western's distinctive excellence and values. Western has conferred honorary doctorates upon nine individuals since receiving this degree-granting authority in 2011. More information about past honorees as well as the nomination and review process is available at www.provost.wwu.edu/honorary-degrees.

Born in Wisconsin but mainly raised in Camas, Washington, Denis Hayes is an environmental advocate and advocate for solar power who rose to prominence as the coordinator of the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970. It is believed some 20 million people participated in the first Earth Day in two thousand colleges and universities, about ten thousand primary and secondary schools, and hundreds of communities. In 1990 Hayes founded the Earth Day Network which has coordinated global celebrations ever since, now in more than 193 countries. As board chair of the international Earth Day Network, he is heading up planning for the 50th Earth Day anniversary in 2020.

Since 1992 Hayes has been president of the Bullitt Foundation in Seattle where, according to his biography on the website, he "leads an effort to mold the major cities of the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia into models of sustainability for a rapidly urbanizing planet. Under his leadership, the Foundation designed and constructed the Bullitt Center—the world’s greenest office building—which it operates as a commercial enterprise. Over the years, Hayes has been special assistant to the Governor of Illinois for natural resources and the environment; senior fellow at the Worldwatch Institute; adjunct professor of engineering and human biology..."
at Stanford University; Regents' Professor at the University of California; and a Silicon Valley lawyer at the Cooley firm. Denis has been a visiting scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington DC and at the Bellagio Center in Italy. During the Carter Administration, Hayes was the director of SERI — the nation’s National Renewable Energy Laboratory. Hayes has received the national Jefferson Medal for Outstanding Public Service and the Rachel Carson Medal as well as the highest awards bestowed by the Sierra Club, the Humane Society of the United States, the National Wildlife Federation, the Natural Resources Council of America, the Global Environmental Facility, the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility, the American Solar Energy Society, and the Commonwealth Club. He has served on dozens of governing boards, including those of Stanford University, the World Resources Institute, the Federation of American Scientists, the Energy Foundation, Children Now, the National Programming Council for Public Television, the American Solar Energy Society, Greenpeace, CERES, and the Environmental Grantmakers Association. Time magazine selected Hayes as one of its “Heroes of the Planet”. He has been profiled as “Newsmaker of the week” by ABC News and as “Today’s Person in the News” by the New York Times. Denis and his wife, Gail Boyer Hayes, co-authored COWED: The Hidden Impact of 93 Million Cows on America’s Health, Economy, Politics, Culture, and Environment (WW Norton, 2015).

As WWU’s Huxley College of the Environment and Earth Day both celebrate their 50th anniversaries in 2020, it is particularly fitting to present this award at the same Spring Commencement ceremony at which Huxley’s graduates will be receiving their degrees.

Proposed Motion:

MOVED, that the Board of Trustees of Western Washington University, upon the recommendation of the President and the faculty, approves awarding an honorary doctorate degree to Denis Hayes, in recognition of his extraordinary contributions to building international awareness and action for environmental protection, and for his distinguished career in public service.