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THE WARREN ALPERT MEDICAL SCHOOL
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Department of Medicine

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The Committee on Honorary Degrees serves in an advisory capacity to the Board of Fellows and President of the University on potential suitable Honorary degree candidates based on distinguished careers, accomplishments, and contributions to humanitarianism e.g. world peace. One of the earlier recipients of this Honorary Degree was George Washington....the first President of the United States. The Committee is comprised of diverse faculty at the Associate and Professorial level(s) with backgrounds in English, Sociology, Anthropology, medical sciences, Performing Arts, Engineering, Physics etc; additional representatives are culled from the Brown undergraduate and graduate classes. The Committee meets principally in September for review of nominee dossiers derived from Brown, or from the outside; we have also had self-nominees as well. The Committee then reviews applicant credentials and suitability for an honorary degree (e.g., you cannot be an active faculty member), and then ranks the individual based on what is perceived to be their meritorious accomplishments. The Committee embraces gender parity selecting individuals that represent a broad swath of professional accomplishments. Thus, nominated individuals may receive an honorary degree from the Performing Arts, Literature, Science, Politics, and Activism etc. In general, the Committee reviews somewhere between 40 and 100 nominees; this is then pared to between 6 - 8 individuals who are presented to the Board of Fellows and the President at a breakfast meeting in October. The President and Board of Fellows then take into consideration these individuals and select the honoree as a "Honoris Causa", usually conferred at the time of commencement of the following year although some degrees are awarded in a separate ceremony. For example, Mrs. Johnson, the President of Liberia, was awarded an honorary degree at a separate ceremony in 2008. The identity of the degree recipients remains "top secret" revealed only 7 - 10 days prior to commencement. Of all the committees with which I have been involved, this is one of the "more fun" activities in the sense that one is able to select from a broad applicant list of highly distinguished individuals and confer honor by the University. This, then, is an Advisory Committee that enriches the reputation and integrity of this prestigious University.

Respectfully submitted,

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