

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**REQUEST TO AWARD AN HONORARY DOCTOR OF HUMANE LETTERS DEGREE
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA**

Action Requested: Consider approval of the request by the University of Iowa to award an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree to William M. Bryson at Spring 2015 Commencement.

Executive Summary: The University of Iowa wishes to recognize Mr. Bryson for his contributions to literary nonfiction and to science education and communication, and for his outstanding record of leadership in higher education.

Details on Mr. Bryson's Accomplishments:

- ◇ Mr. William ("Bill") Bryson, a native of Des Moines, Iowa, is the internationally acclaimed author of 21 books of literary nonfiction and a champion of writing, literature, and the sciences in higher education.
- ◇ Mr. Bryson's published works include a series of creative, informative, and humorous guides to language, landscape, and history. He is the author of two popular works on the history of the English language – *The Mother Tongue: English and How it Got That Way* and *Made in America: An Informal History of the English Language in the United States* – as well as a guide to precise, mistake-free English usage, *The Dictionary of Troublesome Words*.
- ◇ His bestselling books on travel include *The Lost Continent: Travels in Small-Town America*, *Notes from a Small Island*, *A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail*, and *Down Under. African Diary*, published in 2002, chronicled his travels through Kenya in support of CARE International (Mr. Bryson donated all his royalties and profits from *African Diary* to CARE).
- ◇ His acclaimed work of popular science, *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, won the Aventis prize in 2004, the EU Descartes Price in 2005, the James Joyce Award (from the Literary and Historical Society of University College of Dublin), and the Golden Eagle Award in 2007. A New York Times bestseller and the biggest selling nonfiction book of the decade in the United Kingdom, the book explores the humble and often humorous beginnings of the sciences and advocates for a renewed vigor in science education at all levels of schooling.
- ◇ Mr. Bryson is also esteemed for his achievements in higher education administration and science education advocacy. In 2005, he was honored with the President's Award from Great Britain's Royal Science for Chemistry (RSC), which recognized him for advancing the cause of the chemical sciences. That same year, he joined with the RSC to create the "Bill Bryson Prize," an annual award to encourage science writing in schools. In 2007, he received the Bradford Washburn Award, the highest award given by the Museum of Science in Boston for contributions to the popularization of science. In 2013, he was elected an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society, becoming the first non-British citizen to receive that honor.

- ◇ In 2006, Mr. Bryson was awarded an Honorary Order of the British Empire (OBE) for his contributions to literature.
- ◇ Mr. Bryson served as chancellor of Durham University in England from 2005 to 2011, and in 2012, the university renamed its main library as the Bill Bryson Library in recognition of his outstanding contributions in that role.
- ◇ In 2012, Mr. Bryson was awarded an honorary doctorate from King's College in London. As stated on the college's website, the award was relating to "Bill Bryson OBE: the UK's highest-selling author of non-fiction, acclaimed as a science communicator, historian, and man of letters."
- ◇ The University of Iowa wishes to recognize Mr. Bryson for his extraordinary accomplishments with an honorary degree.