

**Agendum
Oakland University
Board of Trustees Formal Session
March 6, 2015**

**APPROVAL OF HONORARY DEGREE FOR MARY FISHER
A Recommendation**

1. **Division and Department:** Academic Affairs, Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost.

2. **Introduction:** In accordance with Article IX of the Bylaws of the Board of Trustees, honorary degrees may be awarded by the Board of Trustees in recognition of distinguished accomplishment and service within the scope of the arts and letters, sciences, professions, and public service as recognized and supported by the University. The awarding of honorary degrees reaffirms Oakland University's scholarly, creative, and humanitarian values and ties the University to the community at large.

Mary Fisher was raised in Southeast Michigan where she attended the Cranbrook Educational Community, Wayne State University, and the University of Michigan. A trailblazer, she was the first woman to serve as advance person to a sitting U.S. president, the Honorable Gerald R. Ford. She also was a successful television producer.

Ms. Fisher became a household name following her speech at the 1992 Republican National Convention where she challenged attendees to bring an end to the "shroud of silence" surrounding HIV/AIDS and challenged the nation to "set aside prejudice and politics to make room for compassion and sound policy." Her speech to the convention was included in Words of a Century: the Top 100 American Speeches, 1900-1999, (Oxford University Press). She sought action and has taken the lead through speaking engagements and through the Mary Fisher Clinical AIDS Research and Education (CARE) Fund at the University of Alabama-Birmingham. CARE supports clinical and outcomes-based research for persons with HIV/AIDS. Her determination to raise AIDS awareness, to remind the world that HIV/AIDS is a human disease, and to support research to combat it contributed to the betterment of society.

Ms. Fisher also is a passionate supporter of initiatives to improve the status of vulnerable women and girls. She has helped women with HIV/AIDS around the globe support themselves by producing hand-beaded bracelets that are sold in the United States. In Zambia, she is involved in the ABATAKA project, in which women and girls acquire job skills and income that allow them to educate, feed, and house their families and in some cases start small business. Her support for and involvement in these initiatives are further evidence that she contributes to the betterment of society on an international scale.

**Approval of Honorary Degree for Mary Fisher
Oakland University
Board of Trustees Formal Meeting
March 6, 2015
Page 2**

As an author and artist, Ms. Fisher has achieved great success and notoriety. Two collections of her speeches and personal photographs have been published, Sleep with Angels and I'll Not Go Quietly. She has written two memoirs. The first, My Name Is Mary, was published when AIDS was a life-ending condition. Her second, Messenger, a Self-Portrait, chronicles her life, surviving breast cancer and accepting new challenges. Her "Letter to My Sons" is included in the best-selling collection, Letters of the Century: American 1900-1999 (2000, Dial Press).

A handmade paper and fiber artist, Ms. Fisher's work has been featured in solo and group shows in major galleries across the country and is held in private collections both in the United States and Europe. Her work in photography and sculpture has also been heralded. As an artist, she has been profiled in magazines including *More*, *Quilting Arts*, *Art and Culture*, *Adornment* as well as *Town and Country*. She also has been a featured guest artist on *The Quilt Show* and *NowSewing.net*.

The Honorary Degree Committee recommends Ms. Fisher as a candidate for the honorary degree of Doctor of Humanities *Honoris Causa* for her contributions to the betterment of society and culture around the globe and for her exceptional work as a philanthropist, author and artist.

3. **Previous Board Action:** The Board of Trustees periodically awards honorary degrees at its Formal Sessions.
4. **Budget Implications:** None.
5. **Educational Implications:** The awarding of honorary degrees is an established tradition in academe, by which the University reaffirms its scholarly, creative, and humanitarian values and its ties to the wider community.
6. **Personnel Implications:** None.
7. **University Reviews/Approvals:** The Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost has recommended approval of the recipient to receive an Honorary Degree.

Approval of Honorary Degree for Mary Fisher
Oakland University
Board of Trustees Formal Meeting
March 6, 2015
Page 3

8. **Recommendation**

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees awards the honorary degree of Doctor of Humanities *Honoris Causa* to Mary Fisher.

9. **Attachments:** None.

Submitted to the President

on 2/26, 2015 by



James P. Lentini, D.M.A.
Senior Vice President for
Academic Affairs and Provost

Recommended on 2/27, 2015
to the Board for Approval by



George W. Hynd
President