

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

**APPROVAL OF HONORARY DEGREE FOR JOSEPH TRAVOLTA  
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.

Joseph Travolta is an award-winning film-maker who combines his passion for film and dedication to individuals with special needs through his company, Inclusion Films. His company's mission is to provide practical experience for individuals with developmental disabilities to develop employable skills covering both technical and life skills with an emphasis in the video/film industry. After completing the workshop, students are encouraged to apply for positions with Team Diversity Media, a production company linked to Inclusion Films. Mr. Travolta also has provided short film camps for children with developmental disabilities since 2005. While this initiative began in Los Angeles, the program is offered at multiple sites around the country including here at Oakland University. Over the last 9 years, over 450 campers have attended the OUCARES camp and many have attended all 9 years. Campers participating in the program develop self-esteem, confidence and creativity through acting, improvisation and digital filmmaking in a non-competitive environment.

Inspired by and working with Mr. Travolta and Inclusion Films, the School of Education and Human Services began exploring the potential for employable skills programming. With funding from the State of Michigan Department of Community Mental Health, OUCARES started the first practical film workshop outside the state of California for autistic adults. The Practical Film Workshop for Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder is a 20-week program that will empower adults with ASD to develop the skills necessary for employment in the film/media entertainment industry. Using film and digital technology, students learn the art of filmmaking by working on a professional short film in both the studio and on-location environments.

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The nomination for Mr. Travolta stated, "In a society that relies on an informed, educated citizenry, no one should be denied the opportunity to attain his or her fullest potential. Therefore, the University has established a goal to build a community that welcomes and honors all persons and provides equal opportunity in education and employment to all individuals. Mr. Travolta's work is a testament to his commitment to this cause and it supports the mission of Oakland University."

The Honorary Degree Committee recommends Mr. Travolta as a candidate for the honorary degree of Doctor of Arts *Honoris Causa* for his creative and passionate approach to assisting individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder and their families. His record of accomplishment in offering film camps, film training programs for adults with autism, and employment opportunities for autistic adults is a contribution to society and an outstanding achievement worthy of this recognition.

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 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.

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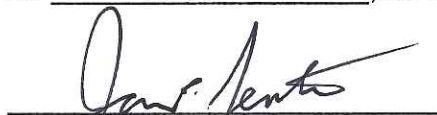
8. Recommendation

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees awards the honorary degree of Doctor of Arts *Honoris Causa* to Joseph Travolta.

9. Attachments: None.

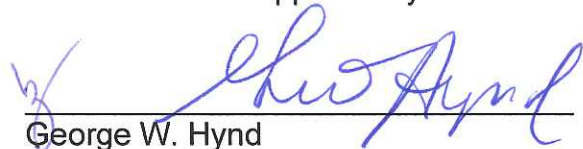
Submitted to the President

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