

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
**UNIVERSITY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**UDC Resolution 2020-\_\_\_\_\_**

**SUBJECT: Conferral of Honorary Degree upon Abiy Ahmed Ali, Prime Minister of Ethiopia**

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to D.C. Code §38-1202.06(3), the Board of Trustees has authority to award degrees and to establish policy with respect to the award of degrees; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to 8 DCMR §315.2, the President, upon consultation with the Honorary Degree Committee and the Faculty Senate, has recommended Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali be awarded an honorary degree for his significant contributions to international relations, social justice, and public service, and for advocating for peace both in his country and beyond its borders, through a variety of positions, including, but not limited to: serving in the Ethiopian military where he achieved the rank of lieutenant colonel before continuing his public service as head of their Network Security Agency, responsible for cybersecurity; ascending through elected roles in the House of Peoples' Representatives eventually to the Prime Minister position in April 2017; and for his efforts strengthening the democratic process, including the release of political prisoners and including the appointment of women to his cabinet. His leadership in broaching peace with the Eritrean leader to end their decades-long war, as well as his mediation of other international conflicts, was recognized with the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize. His decades of dedication to democratic ideals, peace, and social change, plus his fearless leadership in the face of threats, make him an outstanding role model of the positive influence and effect that an informed and determined citizen can have in the world; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to 8 DCMR §315.3, the Board of Trustees must approve the recommendation of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali by an affirmative vote of three-fourths (¾) of the members present at the meeting of the Board following the meeting at which the recommendation was made;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of Trustees of the University of the District of Columbia hereby approves the recommendation of the awarding of the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali, with all the honors, privileges, and duties pertaining thereto at a future Commencement.

Submitted by the Academic & Student Affairs Committee: March 19, 2020

Approved by the Board of Trustees:

April 21, 2020

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Christopher D. Bell  
Chairperson of the Board

Lawrence T. Potter, Jr., Ph.D.  
Chief Academic Officer

March 11, 2020

Ronald Mason, Jr., J.D.  
President  
University of the District of Columbia

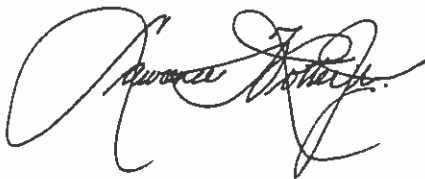
Dear President Mason:

I would like to recommend for your consideration the nomination of Dr. Abiy Ahmed Ali, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, for an honorary degree. The Prime Minister's recent 2019 Nobel Peace Prize would merit an honorary degree for his significant contributions to international relations, social justice, and public service. After further research, I believe his promotion of peace, equity, and collaboration also aligns with the values of the University, the District of Columbia, and our nation. Attached is a biographical sketch that provides more details on Prime Minister Ali, and formally articulates my recommendation and rationale for awarding an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters to him.

The DCMR (315) states that the President may recommend a nominee to the Board of Trustees, after consulting with the Faculty Senate. (It does not require approval from the Faculty Senate.) The next scheduled Faculty Senate meeting is next Tuesday, March 17. However, it may be canceled depending upon the University's plans to deal with the Covid-19 crisis, and you may need to advise them via email. Pending presentation of the proposed honorary degree information to the Senate, your recommendation can be presented as an information item to the Academic and Student Affairs Committee, until the consultation is determined. It will require a three-fourths majority vote of the full BOT at their meeting. If approved for the honorary doctorate, we would need to confirm if he would be able to attend the Commencement (and Honorands Reception), which is a stipulation receiving an honorary degree.

The District of Columbia region is home to a sizable Ethiopian community, and UDC has a sizable international student body, particularly from the African Diaspora. Honoring Prime Minister Ali's contributions on the international stage would convey UDC's understanding of global issues and support of the men and women in pivotal roles who embody and exemplify our values. He will be a source of inspiration to our students, faculty, and the larger community.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposed honoree. I am,



Lawrence T. Potter, Jr., Ph.D.

Attachment

Proposed Recipient of Honorary Degree for  
UDC's Spring Commencement

**ABIY AHMED ALI**  
Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali is being recognized for his significant efforts to nurture and solidify peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea and several other African nations. Through his service both in the military and as a politician, Prime Minister Ali has displayed a devotion to his nation and a desire to solve their conflicts and challenges through diplomacy and collaboration, rather than war and exclusion. He has used his leadership role to expand and enhance his country's democratic policies and practices, including releasing political prisoners and increasing the number of women appointed to governmental positions. For his pivotal role in helping to resolve the long-term war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, as well as serving as a mediator in other African nations' conflicts, Prime Minister Ali was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 2019. His commitment to peace, equity, and social justice, at risk of his own life, serves as an outstanding example and source of inspiration for the University's diverse students and faculty. For representing UDC's values so well, we are proud to honor his achievements with a Doctorate of Humane Letters.

**Abiy Ahmed Ali** was born in 1976 in Beshasha, a town in the Oromia region of Ethiopia, a Muslim father and a Christian mother, which may be the source of his life-long commitment to peace and diplomacy. He first served in the military where he fought against the Derg (Dergue) regime (which ruled Ethiopia from 1974 to 1991) and later served in the Ethiopian National Defense Forces, where he achieved the rank of lieutenant colonel. While still in the military, he earned a bachelor's degree in computer engineering (2001) from Microlink Information Technology College in Addis Ababa. He subsequently was made head of the Information Network Security Agency (2007), the Ethiopian government's organization responsible for cybersecurity.

He left the military and in 2010, Dr. Abiy was elected to the House of Peoples' Representatives as a member of the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), which was part of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) ruling coalition. In the following years, he earned a master's degree in transformational leadership (2011) from the International Leadership Institute (in Addis Ababa, in partnership with Greenwich University in London); a master's in business administration (2013) from Leadstar College of Management and Leadership, in partnership with Ashland University in Ohio, U.S.; and a doctorate (2017) from the Institute for Peace and Security Studies of Addis Ababa University.

Dr. Abiy was elected chair of the OPDO party in February 2017, and then elected chair of the EPRDF ruling coalition on March 27. On April 2, 2017, the House of Peoples' Representatives elected him Prime Minister, becoming the first Oromo to serve in that position. It was hoped that his election as Prime Minister would help quell the remaining tensions between the Oromo people and the government.

Almost immediately, Prime Minister Abiy made efforts to bring about dramatic changes regarding strengthening the democratic process, improving the economy, and resolving the country's long-standing border conflict with Eritrea. In his first year, thousands of political prisoners were released, and some opposition groups were removed from the government's list of organizations that had been deemed to be terrorist groups. He later signed a peace agreement with one of the groups, which was designed to end more than 30 years of conflict in the Ogaden region. Ali formed a new cabinet, distinguished not only for its smaller size but also for the number of women that Ali appointed, which meant that the country had its first gender-balanced cabinet.

The most significant achievement of Ali and the EPRDF-led government was dramatic progress made in the attempts to find peace with Eritrea. Ali announced on June 5, 2018, that Ethiopia would adhere to the terms of the 2000 peace agreement that had been intended to end the border war with Eritrea that had begun in 1998. This included accepting and implementing the 2002 ruling that demarcated the border

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*Learning, discovery, and engagement \* Academic excellence \* High expectations \* Student success  
Innovation \* Cross-cultural and international perspectives \* Technological competencies  
Collaboration among our internal and external partners \* Public service*

Proposed Recipient of Honorary Degree for  
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between the two countries, which Ethiopia had previously rejected. He went to Eritrea to meet with their president, Isaias Afwerki, resulting in an agreement to reestablish ties between the two countries in the areas of diplomacy, trade, communications, and transportation, as well as to reopen their borders. This was followed by a momentous joint statement from Ali and Isaias on July 9, 2018, declaring that the state of war that had existed between their two countries for 20 years had come to an end. Prime Minister Ali also engaged in resolving other regional conflicts, serving as a mediator in conflicts between Eritrea and Djibouti and between Kenya and Somalia and in Sudan's civil conflict.

In 2019, Prime Minister Ali was the recipient of the Nobel Prize for Peace for his efforts to resolve Ethiopia's border conflict with Eritrea. Although his overtures and reform efforts were welcomed and applauded by many, not everyone in Ethiopia was ready to accept such change, which allowed simmering ethnic tensions to be brought to the fore. At a rally in June 2018, a grenade was launched at the stage where Ali was present; he escaped unscathed, but two people were killed and scores more injured. In June 2019, in what the government labeled a failed coup attempt centered in the Amhara region, several high-ranking officials were killed. In his Nobel Prize remarks, Prime Minister Ali said, "*I am committed to toil for peace every single day and in all seasons. I am my brother's keeper. I am my sister's keeper too. I have promises to keep before I sleep. I have miles to go on the road of peace.*"

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## Fiscal Impact Statement

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**TO:** The Board of Trustees  
**FROM:** Managing Director of Finance *David A. Franklin*  
**DATE:** April 21, 2020  
**SUBJECT:** Honorary Degree upon Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali, Ethiopia

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### Conclusion

It is concluded that there is no fiscal impact associated with the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) awarding an honorary degree to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali, Ethiopia.

### Background

The President, upon consultation with the Chief Academic Officer and the Faculty Senate, has recommended that Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali be awarded an honorary doctorate of humane letters degree for his significant contributions to peace, international relations, and social justice. He was recognized with a 2019 Nobel Prize for Peace for his role helping to bring an end to the 20-year war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. He would serve as an inspiration and role model to our students, faculty and larger UDC community.

### Financial Impact

This request has been approved based upon the information provided. There is no anticipated fiscal impact at this time.