

Board Meeting  
January 23, 2014

## AWARD HONORARY DEGREE, SPRINGFIELD

**Action:** Award Honorary Doctorate Degree

**Funding:** No New Funding Required

The Senate at the Springfield campus has recommended that an honorary degree be conferred on the following person at Commencement Exercises on May 17, 2014:

**Evelyn Brandt Thomas**, co-Founder, Brandt Consolidated, Inc.--the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters

Evelyn Brandt grew up on a small family farm near Pleasant Plains, Illinois. She graduated from Springfield High School in 1940 and went on to earn an Accounting degree at Illinois Business College, an unusual step for a young woman in her day. In the early 1950s, Evelyn and her brother, Glen, started a small fertilizer business to supplement the family's income on the farm. Evelyn managed the business while Glen applied anhydrous ammonia to local farmers' fields.

Over the course of 60 years, Evelyn and Glen have remained co-owners of the business, which has grown to become Brandt Consolidated, a multi-million dollar international company dedicated to helping Illinois farmers adopt new and profitable technologies on the family farm. Today the company is one of Springfield's largest employers and it now operates offices in Chile, and France, as well as in Egypt and South Africa. In 2012, the company was named to Inc. Magazine's list of 500 Fastest Growing Private Companies with over \$438 million in revenue. The fact that Evelyn has been one of only a very few women to succeed in agricultural business is a special tribute to her expertise, determination, and diplomacy. Today, at 90 years of age, Evelyn continues to perform an active role in the business, serving as Secretary-Treasurer and going to work nearly every day.

A person of distinction for success in business, Evelyn Brandt Thomas has also been active in philanthropy for many years, making significant contributions to 4-H and many other non-profit organizations in Central Illinois as well as to many colleges and universities including the University of Illinois. She has encouraged women to pursue careers in business through her support of the Evelyn Brandt Thomas Scholarship at UIS. In 2002, the Association of Fund Raising Professionals awarded Evelyn Brandt Thomas and her husband, Gordon, its Outstanding Philanthropist Award.

Evelyn Brandt Thomas has made distinguished and innovative contributions to the technological transformation of farming in Illinois; contributions that have made it possible for family farming to be sustained as a small business. She has been an inspiration for women in business for decades. Her widespread philanthropy and sustained community service have contributed to the quality of life for all who live and work in the Springfield community.

The Board action recommended in this item complies in all material respects with applicable State and federal laws, University of Illinois *Statutes, The General Rules Concerning University Organization and Procedure*, and Board of Trustees policies and directives.

The Chancellor, University of Illinois at Springfield and Vice President, University of Illinois concurs with this recommendation.

The Vice President for Academic Affairs recommends approval.

The President of the University concurs.