

Board Meeting
March 6, 2014

AWARD HONORARY DEGREE, URBANA

Action: Award Honorary Doctorate Degree

Funding: No New Funding Required

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

Phillip A. Sharp, Professor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology--the honorary degree of Doctor of Science

Phillip A. Sharp received his Ph.D. in Chemistry from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1969. He is a longtime Professor of 30 years at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Professor Sharp served as the Director of the Center for Cancer Research at MIT for 6 years (1985-1991) and then accepted the position as Head of the Department of Biology (1991-1999). He was also the Founding Director of the McGovern Institute in 2000 and served until 2004. Since 1999, Professor Sharp has held the title MIT Institute Professor, a distinction given to a very small number of faculty members with extraordinary records of achievement. This honor reflects his receipt of the 1993 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine that was awarded for his 1977 landmark discovery of discontinuous genes in mammalian cells that required the excision of introns via RNA splicing. Professor Sharp's research legacy includes contributions to the foundation of RNAi (an RNA-dependent regulatory mechanism that serves as an on/off switch mechanism for gene expression) for which one of his students, Dr. Andrew Fire won the 1998 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. Professor Sharp is noted as one of the founding entrepreneurs of the biotechnology industry. He co-founded Biogen in 1978, which merged with IDEC Pharmaceuticals in 2003 to form Biogen Idec, Inc. In addition, he co-founded Alnylam Pharmaceuticals in 2002. Professor Sharp has received many prominent distinctions including election to the American Philosophical Society, where he was awarded the 1999 Benjamin Franklin Medal. He is an elected member of the

National Institute of Medicine, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and National Academy of Sciences, as well as a Foreign Fellow of the Royal Society of the United Kingdom. In 2004, Professor Sharp was awarded the National Medal of Science. He also received the Albert Lasker Basic Medical Research Award in 1988.

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 Urbana-Champaign and Vice President, University of Illinois concurs in the recommendation.

The Vice President for Academic Affairs recommends approval.

The President of the University concurs.