Approved by the Board of Trustees

July 22, 2021

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Board Meeting

July 22, 2021

AWARD HONORARY DEGREE, CHICAGO

**Action:** Award Honorary Degree

**Funding:** No New Funding Required

The University of Illinois Chicago Senate has nominated the following person for conferral of an honorary degree at the Commencement exercises in May 2022. The Chancellor, University of Illinois Chicago, and Vice President of the University of Illinois System recommends approval of this nomination.

**M.R. Jayaram, Chairman, Gokula Education Foundation** -- the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters

Dr. Jayaram is a leader in higher education, a visionary, philanthropist, industrialist and public servant. He is Chairman of the Gokula Education Foundation (GEF) (Public Trust), in Bengaluru, India, which was established in 1962. Under the aegis of the GEF and as Chairman of the Foundation for the past two decades, Dr. Jayaram has pioneered an inclusive and innovative higher education system in the city of Bengaluru under a unified brand identity: the Ramaiah Group of Educational Institutions. As Chairman of the Group, Dr. Jayaram has dedicated himself to a mission of “inclusive excellence.” He has done so through pioneering initiatives on modern campuses with state-of-the-art infrastructure.

Currently, the Ramaiah group of educational institutions has more than 5000 employees and 17 educational institutions with approximately 20,000 students. These institutions are active in education and research that span a wide range of disciplines and are actively engaged within communities through their service activities. Additionally, these groups of institutions are involved in the delivery of services in Engineering, Social Sciences, Health Care, Law, Management, and General Sciences. Therefore, the presence of Ramaiah institutions has an impact in the daily lives of the citizens of India.

Because of this mission-oriented focus, the Ramaiah group has been able to recruit and retain brilliant, motivated, and committed individuals to its faculty ranks, and has provided a platform conducive for its students to pursue their higher education dreams while equipping them to make a difference in the world. Dr. Jayaram has expanded the Group’s commitment to advancing the cause of healthcare and education through various initiatives including the Ramaiah Memorial Hospital, the Ramaiah Indic Specialty Ayurveda Restoration Hospital, Ramaiah Public Policy Center and the Ramaiah University of Applied Sciences.

Dr. Jayaram is also well-known for his contributions to public service. As early as 1966, he launched two magazines: “Thainadu” and “Gokula,” to inform and educate people on their social responsibilities urging his readers to exercise their democratic rights to hold elected and government officials accountable. Subsequently, in 1971, he contested and won the election to the Karnataka State Assembly as its youngest member. In 1977, when then Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi declared a National Emergency and curbed free speech, Dr, Jayaram resigned in protest and continued to fight to restore democracy.

His political and social activism did not stop there, as he made it his mission to promote the rights of women and minorities. Ramaiah Institutions are recognized for their diverse workforce comprising employees from all walks of life and from many different regions in India, regardless of socio-economic standing. Dr. Jayaram embraces all forms of diversity as a strength, and much like UIC, recognizes that diversity brings together different life experiences and perspectives, enhancing the learning and teaching experience.

Dr. Jayaram was nominated by the Government of Karnataka as member of the Bangalore University Syndicate and Senate in 1975-76. The Syndicate is the highest decision-making body of the University. During his tenure, the Karnataka State University’s Act of 1976 was passed by the Karnataka Legislature – a landmark act in the annals of governance among the public state universities in India. Most of the public state universities in India have modelled their governance structures along the lines of this Act. As public state universities comprise 55 percent of the total number of universities in the country, the impact of his efforts have been enormous.

Dr. Jayaram is associated with the Education Promotion Society for India (EPSI) – a not-profit agency with a membership of 5,200 educational institutions in India and has served as a catalyst for promoting Indian Higher Education since 2012. Given his active engagement and robust contributions to the field of higher education, he was elected as Chairman of the EPSI Medical Education Committee in 2012 and has continued to serve as a Senior Vice President since 2015. Under his leadership, the EPSI has emerged as a think-tank that analyzes relevant data and information, and influences education policies and policy-making both at the national and regional levels.

In addition, Dr. Jayaram has served as a catalyst for the range of collaborations between our institutions. His passionate dedication to finding alignments have brought together several research and practice endeavors seamlessly. The UIC College of Medicine and the Gokula Education Foundation (GEF-Medical) are collaborating on a Heart Rescue India Project, which is supported by Medtronic Foundation (in the 4th year of a 5-year grant). The aim of the project is to develop a scalable model to improve pre-hospital care for heart attack victims. The Center for Global Health at UIC and GEF-Medical have also been working together on a Bone Marrow Transplantation (BMT) program for over four years, generating significant revenue to support BMT activities in developing countries. The goal is to develop an internationally accredited BMT program that will address the needs of historically underserved regions. There are faculty exchange programs and many more innovative pathways for further growth in the relationship between our institutions.

Finally, and very importantly, Dr. Jayaram led Ramaiah to become the very first international partner to the Discovery Partners Institute (DPI).

Dr. M.R. Jayaram, through his contributions to higher education, diversity, and public service, embodies the core values that define UIC, and therefore he is most deserving of an Honorary Degree from the University of Illinois Chicago.

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 Interim Executive Vice President and President of Academic Affairs concurs with this recommendation.

The President of the University System recommends approval.