

Board Meeting
March 10, 2010

APPROVE HONORARY DEGREE, CHICAGO

Action: Approve the Award of Honorary Doctorate Degree

Funding: No New Funding Required

The Senate at the Chicago campus has nominated the following person for conferral of honorary degree at Commencement exercises in May 2010. The Chancellor recommends approval of this nomination.

Sam Pitroda, one of the most influential and innovative business leaders of our time, accomplished inventor and committed social thinker and activist -- the honorary degree of Doctorate of Humane Letters.

Sam Pitroda revolutionized the telecommunication system of India and earned him one of seven esteemed Economist Innovation Awards (2006) for business-process innovations. He is credited with “pioneering India’s communications revolution” by deploying instantly-recognizable yellow telephone kiosks in every town and village in India -- providing access to a telecommunications system where one did not exist or where it could take up to ten years for a single phone line installation. He spent the entire decade, between 1982 and 1992 transforming the country’s telecommunications sector, eventually becoming chairman of the first India Telecom Commission with a token salary of one rupee per year.

Widely regarded as one of the earliest pioneers of hand-held computing devices, his invention and patent of the Electronic Diary in 1975 was the first in a continuing stream of innovations through the 1970s and early 1980s, in which he registered a series of patents related to digital switching and mobile phone based technology that transformed telecommunications not just within the United States but across the globe. As chairman of World Tel, a telecom venture fund, Mr. Pitroda served as an advisor to the United Nations Secretary-General to find creative solutions to the digital divide in the developing world.

Mr. Pitroda's many contributions to public service include service as an advisor to the Indian government in the initiation and implementation of health related national projects including sanitation, clean water delivery, shelter, food, and immunizations. He also serves as chairman of India's National Knowledge Commission whose mission is the restructuring of India's learning institutions and infrastructure to meet the current and future demands of their growing population.

He has effectively and successfully translated his scientific discoveries for the betterment of the human condition. Mr. Pitroda received his Master of Science. in Physics from Maharaja Sayajirao University in Vadodara and a Master of Science in Electrical Engineering from the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago. He is a true visionary and a great humanitarian.

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 Vice President for Academic Affairs concurs.

The President of the University recommends approval.