

Board Meeting
November 15, 2018

AWARD HONORARY DEGREES, CHICAGO

Action: Award Honorary Degrees

Funding: No New Funding Required

The University of Illinois at Chicago Senate has nominated the following persons for conferral of honorary degrees at the Commencement exercises in May 2019.

The Chancellor, University of Illinois at Chicago, and Vice President, University of Illinois recommends approval of these nominations.

Aleksander Hemon, Writer and Journalist -- the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters

Aleksander Hemon is an acclaimed Chicago writer and journalist who arrived in our city to briefly visit a friend, 25 years ago, at the onset of the wars that savagely splintered a formerly multiethnic Yugoslav state. His writing champions Chicago, not with empty boosterism, but by espousing and promoting community spirit, tolerance, and possibilities not found elsewhere. His steep climb to book writing, *New Yorker* essays, and prestigious awards started and continued on the streets of Chicago, first in the role of a bike messenger, then sandwich 'artist,' Greenpeace canvasser, bookstore clerk, and English as a Second Language teacher. His achievements are approximately as fantastic as they are inspirational and so clearly aligned with the mission of our University. His success is even more remarkable and inspiring given his secondary adoption of English, now his principal working language. His notable awards include: 2017 PEN America Jean Stein Grant for Literary Oral History, for *How Did You Get Here? Tales of Displacement*; 2013 National Book Critics Circle Award (Autobiography) shortlist for *The Book of My Lives*; 2012 United States Artists Fellow Award; 2012 National Magazine Award for Essay and

Criticism for "The Aquarium;" 2011 PEN/W.G. Sebald Award; 2011 Premio Gregor von Rezzori for foreign fiction translated into Italian for The Lazarus Project (Il Progetto Lazarus), translated by Maurizia Balmelli (Einaudi); 2009 National Magazine Award for Fiction for *The New Yorker*; 2008 National Book Award, finalist for The Lazarus Project; 2008 National Book Critics Circle Award, finalist for The Lazarus Project; 2004 MacArthur Fellows Program from the MacArthur Foundation; 2003 Guggenheim Fellowship; 2003 National Book Critics Circle Award finalist for *Nowhere Man*; and 2001 John C. Zacharis First Book Award for *Ploughshares*.

John E. Major, President and Founder of MTSG -- the honorary degree of Doctor of Engineering

John E. Major has been an influential force behind the major technological innovations in the wireless telecommunications over the last 50 years. Mr. Major earned a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Rochester in 1967, an MBA from Northwestern in 1969, a Juris Doctorate from Loyola University of Chicago in 1973, as well as a Master of Science in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Illinois at Chicago in 1982.

John began his engineering career at Kleinschmidt-SCM in 1967 and when he left ten years later was Vice President of Engineering, and then joined Harris Broadcast as Vice President of Global Service. In 1979, John started his illustrious career at Motorola as Director of Physical Design. John was co-inventor on many U.S. and worldwide patents, including U.S. Patent #5054110 "Multi-site dispatching system cell registration" which was one of the critical inventions to allow multiple geographical cell sites to support moving wireless/cellular users as they pass from one cell to another. John Major was also an inventor on some of the key technology for Motorola's Iridium project (planned in the mid-1980s and deployed in the late 1990s) which was a constellation of 66 low- earth-orbit communication satellites. His contributing invention to Iridium included U.S. Patent #5894590 "Independent satellite-based communications systems sharing common frequency spectrum and method of operation thereof." John was promoted to Senior Vice President and General Manager for Motorola's Worldwide Systems Group and just a few years later became Motorola's Senior Vice President and Chief Technology Officer (CTO). In 1998, John left Motorola to serve as Executive Vice President of QUALCOMM and President of QUALCOMM's Wireless Infrastructure Division. In 2000, John left QUALCOMM to serve as Chairman and CEO of Wireless Knowledge and Novatel Wireless and in 2004 became CEO of Apacheta

Corp. where he stayed until 2006. In 2003, John founded MTS&G, an investment and consulting firm. John has served on numerous corporate boards of directors including ArrayComm, Keynote, Seawall Networks, Artic Sand Technologies, Littelfuse, Pulse Electronics, ORBCOMM, Lennox International, Vantrix, and others. John served as chairman of the board of directors for several companies including Resonant (2013-present) and Broadcom (2008-2014) which has a market cap of over \$100 billion.

In 2003, he joined the external UIC Engineering Advisory Board and helped to create the Freshman Guaranteed Professional Internship Program. During his tenure, Advisory Board members have gifted more than \$15.0 million to the College of Engineering which has contributed to student scholarships and building and renovation projects. Member commitments have also been instrumental in securing more than \$2.2 million in NSF-STEM scholarship awards for our students. John has also been personally very generous, with gifts and pledges totaling well into six figures.

Ruth Aizuss Migdal, Sculptor -- the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters

Ruth Aizuss Migdal is best known as a sculptor of monumental statues in cast iron, steel, and ceramic materials. These grace many of our streets, parks, and private gardens and have been shown in many special exhibitions both in our city, other U.S. cities, and abroad. Initially inspired by the small ceramic "Venus" sculptures of the Upper Paleolithic art of Europe, her "Venus" sculptures are magnificent, looming figures larger than life size. In addition to the cognitive sophistication and aesthetic inspiration she begins each piece with, these figures require both technical skill and real muscle to design and produce. She begins with wax models, which she casts, then she assembles the sculptures in pieces, each of which is cast separately, and then welded together. Ruth's ceramic bas-reliefs and sculptures in the round are found in many private gardens in the city. They are often mounted upon masonry walls amid cascades of ivy.

Ruth is quintessentially a Chicagoan, having been born and raised here and has studied in the city's schools. After taking part in Art Institute junior programs, she received scholarships to the School of the Art Institute for her BFA and to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for her MFA. Because of reaching her brilliant career from immigrant family origins, she is an inspiration to all those UIC students who are the first in their family to attend college.

She has given a life of service in arts education at public institutions. As a long-time Professor at Harold Washington College and at UIC, she gave

access to an excellent education to a large number of diverse students. Ruth taught not only the history and interpretation of art but also art techniques.

As a great humanitarian, Ruth is raising her grandson, whom she has adopted with her husband, James Brown, the distinguished archaeologist who taught in the anthropology department at Northwestern University.

Carol H. Retzky, Philanthropist -- the honorary degree of Doctor of Science

Carol Retzky, along with her late husband Herbert, owned pharmacies in Chicago most of their working lives. They were leaders in their community and within the profession of pharmacy. Carol recently lost Herb at the age of 93. In the last decade, they've become philanthropists in the Oak Park area as well as to UIC, Herb's alma mater (Class of 1946). Both Carol and Herb came from families with pharmacy backgrounds. Herb's father passed away while he was a senior in high school forcing him to go to pharmacy school so the family could make ends meet. Carol's father and brother were both pharmacy owners as well.

The field of pharmacy played an important part in the lives of both of them. Herb was a pharmacist (UIC Class of 1946), while Carol was a pharmacy technician. Carol's undergraduate degree was in the performing arts, although had times been different, she would have been a pharmacist had she had her father's support.

The couple consistently supported the college since 2003, and in 2012 their financial gift created the Herbert M. and Carol H. Retzky Endowed Chair in Pharmacy Practice. This gift later expanded to \$5.0 million, the largest monetary gift in the history of the College of Pharmacy, and established the Herbert M. and Carol H. Retzky Deanship. The named deanship is the first at UIC.

Herb was a passionate advocate for pharmacy and a joy to those who knew him. This honorary degree for Carol is a nod to Herb for his success and generosity while also honoring Carol for her passion for pharmacy and success as a business owner and investor.

Harriette Gillem Robinet, Author -- the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters

Harriette Robinet is an award-winning author of children's literature, who has lived in nearby Oak Park since 1965. Her maternal grandfather had been a slave under Robert E. Lee, and her paternal grandparents were

slaves in Maryland. Her heritage, as well as other significant historical events in African-American civil rights, inspired her writing. In addition, she was motivated by the struggles of children with disabilities, as her own child had cerebral palsy.

Her published works include: *Jay and the Marigold*; *Ride the Red Cycle*; *Children of the Fire*; *Mississippi Chariot*; *If You Please, President Lincoln!*; *Washington City is Burning*; *The Twins*, *The Pirates and the Battle of New Orleans*; *Forty Acres and Maybe a Mule*; *Walking to the Bus-Rider Blues*; *Missing from Haymarket Square*; *Twelve Travelers, Twenty Horses*. *Jay and the Marigold* and *Ride the Red Cycle* are about disabled children. All the others are historical fiction. She portrays likeable children and adults, and their needs and struggles, against a pivotal time in American history. She tries to have both European and African American characters in stories, to have no villains but the systems, and to thrill as well as uplift her readers.

Her Literary Awards include: 1991 Friends of American Writers Award; 1997 Carl Sandburg Award; 1998 Midland Authors Award; 1999 Scott O'Dell Award for historical fiction for children; 2013 ILLINOIS READS Book.

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 Executive Vice President and Vice President for Academic Affairs concurs with this recommendation.

The President of the University recommends approval.