

**Agendum  
Oakland University  
Board of Trustees Formal Session  
August 13, 2018**

**APPROVAL OF HONORARY DEGREE FOR GJERTRUD SCHNACKENBERG  
A Recommendation**

- 1. Division and Department:** Academic Affairs, Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost.
- 2. Introduction:** In accordance with Article IX of the Bylaws of the Board of Trustees, honorary degrees may be awarded by the Board of Trustees in recognition of distinguished accomplishment and service within the scope of the arts and letters, sciences, professions, and public service as recognized and supported by the University. The awarding of honorary degrees reaffirms Oakland University's scholarly, creative, and humanitarian values and ties the University to the community at large.

Gjertrud Schackenberg is an accomplished American poet whose work has been recognized internationally. Born in Tacoma, Washington, Schnackenberg attended Mount Holyoke College and graduated in 1975. She is the author of six books of poetry, numerous individual poems that have been published in journals and many collected works of poetry. One of her most recent works is a poem, *Afghan girl*, based upon the iconic photograph, and is like many of her poems, epic in scope. Her poetry has inspired composers to set her words to music. She was considered a prodigy in poetry winning the Glascock Poetry Prize in both 1973 and 1974 and has gone on to receive many other recognitions in her career. She also has won the Lavan Younger Poets Award, the Rome Prize in Literature, a Guggenheim Grant, an Academy Award in Arts and Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the Griffin Poetry Prize.

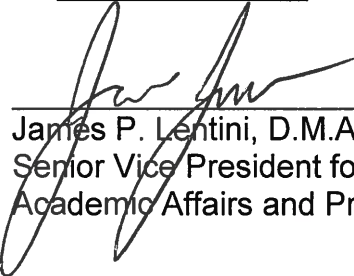
Schnackenberg is known for epic poems with vivid imagery and deft use of language. In the judges citation for the Griffin Prize, Schnackenberg's book, Heavenly Questions was described as "like reading the ocean, its swells and furrows, its secrets fleetingly revealed and then blown away in gust of foam and spray or folded back into nothing but water" and "it demands that we come face to face with matters of mortal importance and it does so in a wildly original music that is passionate, transporting, and heart-rending." Karl Krichwey, writing for Slate in January 2011, argues that her book of poems Heavenly Questions is "perhaps the most powerful elegy written in English by any poet in recent memory and it is a triumphant consummation of Schnackenberg's own work."

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The Honorary Degree Committee was impressed by Schnackenberg's contributions as a poet, her commitment to her craft, the wide recognition of the quality and creativity of her work, her regular engagement with other poets and students, and the widespread recognition she has received. Her nominator, and sister Dikka Berven, states that she recommended Gjertrud Schnackenberg to the committee "as a person whose creativity, productivity and originality represent the kind of values that Oakland University is proud to acknowledge through the bestowal of the honorary degree." The committee wholeheartedly concurs based on their independent review of the life and contributions of Ms. Schnackenberg and recommends she be awarded the honorary degree Doctor of Humanities *Honoris Causa*.

3. **Previous Board Action:** The Board of Trustees periodically awards honorary degrees at its Formal Sessions.
4. **Budget Implications:** None.
5. **Educational Implications:** The awarding of honorary degrees is an established tradition in academe, by which the University reaffirms its scholarly, creative, and humanitarian values and its ties to the wider community.
6. **Personnel Implications:** None.
7. **University Reviews/Approvals:** The Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost has recommended approval of the recipient to receive an Honorary Degree.
8. **Recommendation:** RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees awards the honorary degree of Doctor of Humanities *Honoris Causa* to Gjertrud Schnackenberg.
9. **Attachments:** None.

Submitted to the President  
on 8/9, 2018 by

  
James P. Lentini, D.M.A.  
Senior Vice President for  
Academic Affairs and Provost

Recommended on 8/10, 2018  
to the Board for Approval by

  
Ora Hirsch Pescovitz, M.D.  
President