



COMMENCEMENT

May 2009

Iowa City, Iowa

THE UNIVERSITY
OF IOWA

HONORARY DEGREES

The University of Iowa confers honorary degrees to individuals who have demonstrated extraordinary achievements in such areas as research, scholarship, education, artistic creation, social activism, human rights, or humanitarian outreach. Nominations are made by the faculty, with selections approved by the Provost and the Board of Regents, State of Iowa.

Honorary degrees have been awarded to the following individuals:

Marvin Pomerantz, Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters, December 2007

Ignacio Ponseti, Honorary Doctor of Science, December 2007

Robert Solow, Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters, May 2008

Himie Voxman, Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters, December 2008

The University of Iowa is pleased to make the following award in May 2009:

JOHAN HULTIN, M.D., HONORARY DOCTOR OF SCIENCE: Dr. Hultin is being recognized for his efforts to decipher the causes of the “Spanish flu” epidemic of 1918-19, a project he began in the early 1950s as a UI graduate student in microbiology by attempting to isolate the virus from the bodies of Eskimos buried in the permafrost in Alaska.

Dr. Hultin received both his M.S. degree in Microbiology in 1951 and his M.D. in 1953 from The University of Iowa, and then went on to complete training in Pathology from the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics in 1958.

After a 30-year career as a community pathologist in the Palo Alto, California area, Dr. Hultin continued his investigations into what made the “Spanish flu” so

virulent. In the mid-1990s, he returned to the same Alaskan village to obtain tissue samples from bodies exhumed from the permafrost and, through advanced scientific techniques, his colleague was able to characterize the genome of the virus. His research was published in 1999, and investigators have now established a connection between the 1918-19 virus and avian influenza. Dr. Hultin’s work has given scientists a better understanding of the virus, which allows for the development of vaccines should a pandemic related to “Spanish flu” arise.

Dr. Hultin also was a lead investigator in the 1960s in the development of the automobile seat belt. More recently, at age 80 and in collaboration with researchers in Germany, he helped identify the “einkorn,” the grass from which humans derived the first wheat, after an expedition in Turkish Kurdistan.