

## **Innovative leaders to receive honorary doctorates**

by Allison Reineck - Tuesday, May 03, 2011

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/11636/innovative-leaders-to-receive-honorary-doctorates/>

On May 14, the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh will present two honorary doctorates to innovative leaders who have made significant contributions to the University, region, state and nation.

Receiving an honorary doctorate is one way an academic institution honors a distinguished visitor's contributions to a specific industry or society as a whole. This year's recipients will be recognized with a Doctorate of Humane Letters, honoris causa, as part of UW Oshkosh's May 14 spring commencement ceremony.

### **Connecting campus to local communities**

As chancellor of UW Oshkosh from 1978 to 1989, Edward M. Penson's vision and leadership propelled the campus to better connect the community to UW Oshkosh's prosperity. He made tremendous strides in altering admissions standards, therefore attracting even higher-caliber students and increasing student applications by 45 percent.

Penson developed the John McNaughton Rosebush Distinguished Professorship to recognize and reward excellence in teaching and established the Outstanding Teaching and Academic Staff Awards. The Edward M. Penson Award now honors his legacy by recognizing the full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty with a record of excellence in teaching, scholarship or service to the University.

After his retirement as Chancellor in 1989, Penson started the consulting firm Penson-Strawbridge, which has helped dozens of colleges and universities improve their management and leadership. UW Oshkosh is just one of the beneficiaries of his firm's guidance and talent.

### **Advancing the media industry**

Since co-founding POLITICO, a nonpartisan media company covering national politics, in 2007, alumnus James VandeHei, has consistently demonstrated his ability to lead and advance the media industry. Vanity Fair named him among the 100 most powerful Information Age thinkers, and in 2009, he was elected as the first member to the Pulitzer Prize Board from a primarily online news outlet.

Prior to covering national politics, VandeHei studied journalism and political science at UW Oshkosh. His initial interest in journalism stemmed from covering sports for the Oshkosh Daily Northwestern and then running The Brillion News, a small-town weekly in Wisconsin. After graduating in 1995, he went on to serve as a political reporter and White House correspondent for several publications, including Inside the New Congress, Roll Call, The Wall Street Journal and The Washington Post.

"This spring's honorary doctorate recipients represent two outstanding examples of innovative leadership within higher education and the modern media," UW Oshkosh Chancellor Richard Wells said. "Edward

Penson and James VandeHei each seized their opportunities and championed new ways to grow two distinct organizations into forces for a more informed and empowered democracy.”

In the winter 2011 mid-year commencement, the University presented an honorary doctorate to Muriel A. Howard, president of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

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