



January 4, 2020

Dr. Ben Givens, Secretary
University Senate
119 Independence Hall
1923 Neil Avenue
Columbus, OH 43210

Dear Dr. Givens,

The Honorary Degrees Committee of the University Senate has carefully reviewed the dossier of Professor Dr. Claude Mason Steele for an honorary degree from The Ohio State University. I brought forward the nomination.

Professor Steele received his M.A. and Ph.D. from the Ohio State University. He is among the most influential psychologists of his time. He has served on the faculties of the University of Utah, University of Washington, University of Michigan, Stanford University, Columbia University, and the University of California at Berkeley. He was Director of the Center for Advanced Study in the Social and Behavioral Sciences, Provost of Columbia University, Dean of the School of Education at Stanford University, and Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost at UC Berkeley. He currently serves as President of the Board of the Russell Sage Foundation and as a Trustee of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

Professor Steele has demonstrated extraordinary intellectual and scientific leadership. He has made major empirical and theoretical contributions to three areas in psychology. His alcohol myopia theory explains how alcohol consumption has apparently contradictory social and psychological effects by narrowing the focus of attention to salient information. His self-affirmation theory and research transformed our understanding of cognitive dissonance theory, long the most prominent theory in social psychology, by showing that people are not motivated to reduce cognitive dissonance if given an opportunity to affirm their most important values. Most important, his stereotype threat theory and related research provided a compelling new explanation for the under-performance of women, minorities, and others whose identities are negatively stereotyped. His work showed that by varying subtle features of the situation that de-activate concerns about negative group stereotypes, performance differences associated with groups (e.g., women in math-related contexts, African-Americans taking intellectual tests) can be reduced or eliminated. After publishing numerous award-winning scientific articles, he published a book, *Whistling Vivaldi*, that described his program of research. This award-winning book was adopted by book clubs across the US.

Professor Steele has won numerous honors for his contributions--too many to list here (see the attached CV). I highlight just a few. He has been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the National Academy of Education, the National Academy of Sciences, the American Philosophical Society, and the National Science Board. Professor Steele has received numerous honorary degrees. However, I believe that an honorary degree from his alma mater would be particularly meaningful to him.

By an overwhelming vote, the Committee recommends that Dr. Steele's dossier be forwarded to the University Senate for their consideration, and recommends the title of Doctorate of Education *honoris causa*. Dr. Pope-Davis, the Dean of the College of Education and Human Ecology, also supports this nomination.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Crocker
Ohio Eminent Scholar in Social Psychology
Professor of Psychology
Chair, Senate Honorary Degrees Committee