I.B.14 – GRADUATE SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY CENTER – RESOLUTION TO AWARD HONORARY DEGREES AT THE SCHOOL’S ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY

RESOLVED, that the Graduate Center award Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, Lydia Davis, and Ai-jen Poo the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, *honoris causa*, at the school’s annual commencement ceremony.

EXPLANATION: Patricia Phelps de Cisneros is an internationally renowned patron and supporter of the arts and a philanthropist, with a particular focus on Latin America. In the 1970s, along with her husband, Gustavo A. Cisneros, she founded the New York City and Caracas-based Fundación Cisneros. Its mission is to improve education throughout Latin America and to foster global awareness of the region’s heritage and many contributions to world culture. The Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros (CPPC), the primary art-related program of the Fundación Cisneros, promotes scholarship of Latin American art, excellence in visual arts education, and a high level of expertise among Latin American art professionals. Since 1992, she has been a Trustee of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, (MoMA), and is a Founding Member and Chair of MoMA’s Latin American and Caribbean Fund. In recognition for her work to strengthen and promote education and the arts in Latin America, Patricia Phelps de Cisneros has received numerous awards which include, among others, the Great Cross of the Civil Order of Alfonso X the Wise, Spain; the Leone d’Oro di San Marco, Venice; the Cross of the Legion of Honor, Republic of France; the Americas Society’s Gold Medal; and the Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney Award for Outstanding Patronage of the Arts.

Professor Lydia Davis is an acclaimed fiction writer and translator. She is famous in literary circles for her extremely brief and brilliantly inventive short stories, having received critical attention for her collection of stories, “Break It Down,” which was selected as a finalist for the PEN/Hemingway Award. The book’s positive critical reception helped Davis win a prestigious Whiting Writer’s Award in 1988. In fall 2003 Lydia Davis received one of 25 MacArthur Foundation “Genius” awards. In granting the award the MacArthur Foundation praised Davis’s work for showing “how language itself can entertain.” Lydia Davis is also a celebrated translator of French literature into English. The French government named her a Chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters for her fiction and her distinguished translations of works by Maurice Blanchot, Pierre Jean Jouve, Michel Butor and others. Professor Davis recently published a new translation (the first in more than 80 years) of Marcel Proust’s masterpiece, “Swann’s Way” (2003), the first volume of Proust’s “In Search of Lost Time,” widely regarded as one of the most important literary works of the 20th century. Professor Davis is currently professor and Writer-in-Residence at the University at Albany, SUNY.

Ai-jen Poo is a leading national advocate for workers’ rights. She began organizing immigrant women workers in 1996 as the Women Workers Project organizer at CAAAV Organizing Asian Communities in New York City. In 2000, she co-founded Domestic Workers United (DWU), a city-wide, multiracial organization of domestic workers. DWU led to the passage of the nation’s first Domestic Workers Bill of Rights in 2010, historic legislation that extends basic labor protections to over 200,000 domestic workers in New York State. Currently, Ai-jen Poo is the Director of the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) and the Co-director of Caring Across Generations. NDWA is the primary organization working to build power, respect, and fair labor standards for the 2.5 million nannies, housekeepers and elderly caregivers in the U.S. In 2011, she helped launch Caring Across Generations, a movement to build a caring majority committed to allowing people to mature with dignity, security and independence. Among her many honors and awards, Ai-Jen Poo is a 2014 MacArthur Foundation Fellow, a 2013 World Economic Forum Young Global Leader, and was named to TIME’s list of the 100 Most Influential People in the World in 2012.