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## President's Advisory Panel on University Namings and Recognitions

January 12, 2018

Turnbull Conference Center, Room 103, 555 W Pensacola Street

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

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### Panel Attendees:

#### Members

Renisha Gibbs- Chair

Miguel Hernandez

Maxine Jones

Karen Bearor

Walter Moore

Norman Anderson

Janet Stoner

Maxine Montgomery

Robyn Jackson

Andrew Melville

Chris Pinango

Allisson Yu [via phone conference]

Kyle Doney [via phone conference]

#### Support Staff

Elizabeth Hirst

Danni Staats

### **The meeting began at 9:00 a.m.**

#### 1. Welcome

Panel Chair, Renisha Gibbs, took a moment to identify the panel members on the conference phone line [*Kyle Doney and Allisson Yu*], then started the meeting by welcoming everyone back from the Winter Break. Ms. Gibbs indicated that the panel's agenda was robust, adding that she was pleased University Archivist, Sandra Varry, had agreed to attend the meeting and present a little later on.

#### 2. Public Comments

Ms. Gibbs opened the floor to public comment, and referencing the practice established at the previous panel meetings, reminded speakers to limit their comments to three minutes.

#### [Comment #1]

Daniel Clibbon introduced himself as a student in the FSU Law School and commented that his presentation may be disorganized, as he hadn't been aware of the time limit, and would need to

skip over some of what he had planned to say to accommodate. Mr. Clibbon stated, that having read the minutes from the panel's previous meetings, he was aware that they had heard from alumni regarding Roberts Hall, but that the panel had not yet heard from a current student of the Law School, and for this reason, he had come to talk to them about Virgil Hawkins. Mr. Clibbon explained that the Law School was housed in two buildings; the Advocacy Center, and Roberts Hall, which is the Law School's main and only named building, recognizing former Florida Supreme Court Chief Justice, B.K. Roberts. Mr. Clibbon added that despite the ruling in [the United States Supreme Court] case *Brown vs Board of Education*, Virgil Hawkins' application for admission to the University of Florida College of Law was rejected, and when he took his case to the Florida Supreme Court, he was denied by Roberts on two separate occasions, first under the rationale that admitting Hawkins would result in "great public mischief", and later, that it would affect the financial propriety of the institution, as white students would drop out and white alumni would stop donating. Mr. Clibbon asserted that Roberts never changed his views, even though the Florida Supreme Court ultimately admitted Hawkins to the Florida Bar years later, and opined that Roberts' name shouldn't be recognized at a school teaching inclusion and fairness, but noted that President Thrasher would seem to be only one with the power to change the name, as the building was named through an act of legislation, not because of a donation.

Ms. Gibbs notified Mr. Clibbon that his time had unfortunately expired, but shared that the panel's intention was to schedule Town Hall meetings for the purpose of soliciting feedback from University constituents, and that they were not currently planning to have time limitations for speakers at said meetings. Ms. Gibbs added that once scheduled, information about the Town Hall meetings would be posted on the panel's website and thanked Mr. Clibbon for his time.

[Comment #2]

Danni Vogt thanked the panel for their work, and noting that he had two much to say in three minutes, shared that he had created a website, the information for which was outlined in the handout [*Attachment A*] he had provided the panel prior to the start of the meeting. Mr. Vogt acknowledged that he was not a neutral party, but stated that he was in favor of changing the name [of Roberts Hall], and that he hoped the panel would visit his website to see the entire story. He briefly summarized that as a Florida Supreme Court Justice, B.K. Roberts had written some opinions in the 1950s that kept Virgil Hawkins from attending law school, because he was black. Mr. Vogt opined that the "white power structure" responsible for naming the [Roberts Hall] building, had since become more diverse, and that looking back now, he hoped the community would take a different view. He also expressed that he recognized faulting someone only because they are a segregationist was too narrow a view, as many people were [segregationists] at the time. He asserted that the reason Roberts' name should be removed was due to his ethics, adding that Roberts had refused to carry out his oath to uphold the law by defying the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling when he denied Hawkins case. Mr. Vogt concluded his comments by referencing the University's Motto [*Vires, Artes, Mores*], explaining that "Mores" stood for character, but that he didn't think Roberts' character was representative of how FSU defined good character.

Ms. Gibbs thanked Mr. Vogt for his time, and with the conclusion of public comments, welcomed Ms. Varry to the podium for her presentation.

### 3. University Buildings Presentation

Sandra Varry introduced herself, providing an overview of her credentials and her role at the University; Master of Fine Arts, Master of Library and Information Science, Certified Archivist, Digital Archives Specialist, and currently serving as a Heritage and University Archivist in the library. She proceeded with her presentation, adding the following additional comments:

- *Heritage & University Archives (Slide 2):*
  - In coordination with a Records Management Liaison & General Counsel, they ensure their practices are compliant with the University's Records policy, as well as any applicable State and/or Federal laws.
  - While University Archivists commonly provide assistance to patrons in support of their research, they don't normally complete the research for them, except in service to the University.
  - Outreach efforts can include presenting at an event, such as at the Capital.
  - Supervise students doing projects on campus. Here today as a resource for panel.
- *Archives, Histories, Mythologies (Slide 3):*
  - Primary resources- Contemporary for when they were created. Documents created at the time or during the time period being researched. [Direct or firsthand evidence, such as eyewitness accounts, speeches, and/or statistical data.] Secondary sources are far more common and readily available, but provide a limited window into the past.
  - As they continue their efforts to collect additional resources, concerning and confusing inaccuracies are perpetuated. Inaccurate dates published in a document from 1900, can create problems when it contradicts another recording.
  - Fighting against campus mythologies also causes difficulties. After a while, myths can start to be thought of as facts, and the Archivists must work to find, preserve and educate people on what truly happened or didn't.
  - Always want to go back to primary sources, but FSU did not have an active archivist until early 2000s and it takes a lot of work to go back and find what we need for these types of conversations. Missing institutional records, either don't exist, haven't been found yet [the University is still reviewing a large amount of documents], or are in the state archives, which Ms. Varry has visited on numerous occasions.
- *Timeline (Slide 4):*
  - Lots of variation in dates/history due to legislature and/or budget changes.
  - (1905 – 1909) Buckman act resulted in sectioning off into groups, women/men colleges, based on budget and ideology. Leads to Florida State College for Women (1905 – 1947) largest in the south at the time.
- *Pictures (Slide 5):*
  - Florida Institute was built with intention to bring seminary to Tallahassee, instead of Mariana or Quincy (competitors). Because there was not enough space, College Hall was built. Eventually it was replaced with Westcott 1910, due to structural issues, and once again, there was inadequate space.
- *Buildings Built/Dedicated/Unknown Since 1986 (Slides 6-9):*
  - Build date and dedication date can be very different.

- Still more work to be done in regards to research. Looking for records of dedication ceremonies or state records of when funds were given. The University has a good working relationship with the State Archives, but they are not required to give information to us.
- Facilities' records can be used to determine dates. Beyond what's published, getting a building plan in hand, can often be the best way to see what's correct.
- For a few buildings, they are not able to find good biographical information.

Janet Stoner indicated that the panel had been provided with, what they were told was an outdated list of campus buildings at the last meeting, and requested clarification on whether Ms. Varry's presentation outlined information about new/changed buildings and/or was supplementing that list they were previously given. She also asked if Ms. Varry would be reviewing the different naming opportunities within each building during her presentation.

Ms. Varry confirmed that the building list Ms. Stoner had referenced only covered up to about 1986 and that her presentation provided updated information. She explained that when updating the list, they had completed research on approximately 100 buildings before switching gears to start looking at statues. Ms. Varry acknowledged that her presentation didn't and couldn't cover everything, being that there was too much information to share in one meeting, but offer to come back at another time. She also advised that the panel have the previous list vetted, since she had found some discrepancies in the archives while doing her research, and asserted that it would be sensible to committee recourses to vetting information about a specific building, before the panel makes any kind of decision based on that information.

Ms. Varry continued her presentation:

- *Broward Hall- Dormitory 1917 (Slide 10):*
  - Along with removing Napoleon Bonaparte Broward's statue from their courthouse, the county is also discussing the option of renaming their county, but doing so would cause considerable issues.
- *William Johnston Building (Dining Hall) (Slide 11):*
  - Sewanee Dining Hall
- *B.K. Roberts Hall (Slide 13):*
  - Considerable records to back-up information.
  - Roberts' personal friendship with Fuller Warren caused controversy.
- *Eppes Statue (Slide 14):*
  - Tax records show he did own slaves.
  - Eppes' main goals as intendant mayor was law and order. He saw Tallahassee as a "wild west" scenario, brought law and order to that.
  - WFS had its own Board separate from the state, which is significant since Eppes served as the President.
- *Carraway Building (Slide 15):*
  - "Pork Chop Gang" involved in interrogating people at what is now FAMU and around the town. They moved their focus to "Johns Committee" when they weren't successful. USF, UF, and FSU biggest targets of this new committee.
- *Gilchrist Hall (Slide 16):*

- Information found in scholarly texts; Gilchrist communicating with University President Murphree about forcing people out at UF who saw the north as correct and the south wrong in their views of slavery.
- *J. Stanley Marshall Plaza (Slide 18):*
  - Could be controversial depending on your view of the Vietnam War.
- *Final Comments:* A few buildings need additional research, and my role could be to help find resources, .not as a professional historian, but as an archivist who can provide access to information. Primary sources are always the best avenue.

Ms. Gibbs mentioned that Ms. Varry had compiled a lot of other information, which she had reviewed, but for the sake of time, she had asked Ms. Varry to focus her presentation on buildings she thought the panel would specifically be interested in hearing about. Ms. Gibbs added that while reviewing Ms. Varry's research, she had found a lot of great, positive history related to many of the building's namesakes on campus, but in the interest of the panel's task, Ms. Varry had pulled out buildings the panel may want to consider reviewing, due to potential controversy.

Ms. Gibbs opened the floor to the panel, to ask Ms. Varry any questions they may have.

Maxine Montgomery commended Ms. Varry on her work, and asked if the University had any documentation regarding the names of buildings associated with the Southern Scholarship Foundation (SSF). She stated that to her knowledge SSF had several buildings on campus.

Ms. Varry confirmed that the University did have records regarding that information, and that she could look into it at the panel's request.

Miguel Hernandez asked if, while completing her research, Ms. Varry saw anything on old policies, or methods for naming buildings, that the University used prior to the first naming policy was adopted [in 2011].

Ms. Varry responded that she hadn't, but wouldn't be surprised if those types of documents existed. She explained that being the oldest continuous site of education in the state, the University had thousands of unprocessed records, which made exploring our vast history challenging.

Kyle Doney, referenced a statement Ms. Varry had made during her presentation regarding the Seminole Tribe's approval of the Integration Statue, and noting that he was a member of Seminole Tribe himself, indicated that he wasn't sure where that approval had come from. He asserted that he had worked with the Student Senate last year to contest headdresses being worn at athletic events, and that a correction to the Integration Statue may need to be considered, as the headdress was not an accurate depiction of the Seminole Tribe.

The panel agreed.

Ms. Stoner recalled Dr. Jennings [Vice President for University Advancement] mentioning at the last panel meeting that he and [Former University President] Dr. Barron had collaborated to draft

the first naming policy adopted by the University, and asked Ms. Varry if she had found anything in her research that would indicate there was any other policy or practice documented prior to that, adding that she thought additional research would be valuable for the panel when working on their charge to update the current policy.

Ms. Varry shared that the University had received an archive of presidential records last year, which had not yet been processed and that there could be something in there.

Ms. Gibbs stated that the panel would appreciate Ms. Varry's assistance with additional research.

Walter Moore inquired as to whether Ms. Varry had any other recommendations regarding things the panel should address that were not covered in her presentation.

Ms. Varry proposed that the panel may want to consider recognition of the slave labor used to build certain structures on campus, but advised that further investigation would be required, as that information was not something represented in building records. She also encouraged the panel to keep looking at different building, spaces and statues on campus, as there are so many, and most likely more that need consideration.

Mr. Hernandez stated that he was inspired recently by what was happening in the media related to the topic of women "speaking up" about sexual assault, and how society was no longer considers these acts, nor ignoring reports about assault, to be acceptable. He theorized that the evolution of social norms may expand the panel's tasks to include a review of history on these types of issues, and asked Ms. Varry if she had seen anything about that in her research.

Ms. Varry stated that she couldn't recall anything from her research, but suggested that one of the Historians on campus might be a better resource regarding that topic.

Ms. Stoner expressed appreciation for Mr. Hernandez's comments, as they highlighted how social norms have changed and touched on the important point that there would be other social issues in the future that the panel wasn't thinking about now, which may not be well documented.

Ms. Gibbs stated the panel would most likely invite Ms. Varry back several times, and in an effort to help her focus her research, asked them to think about what other information they would want to hear about. She added that she would also be bringing someone in from the Aesthetics Committee Dr. Jennings had mentioned, commenting that she felt the panel was still in the overview educational phase, and that she wanted to make sure they received all of the information they felt was necessary, before moving forward.

Dr. Moore indicated that he wanted to hear about any other names that almost made Ms. Varry's list [presentation], but didn't.

Ms. Varry agreed to put more information together.

Ms. Gibbs assured Ms. Varry that she would touch base to provide further instructions regarding the panel's request for additional information.

#### 4. General Comments

Ms. Gibbs opened the floor for general comments from the panel.

Mr. Hernandez stated that his mind was still working through the idea of differentiating between someone who has committed acts against humanity versus someone with a controversial political position. He stated he appreciated seeing some of the differences in the two issues in the presentation. He still struggled with the impact of acts that were the norm in a time period but social views have changed, and how would the panel be able to distinguish those and consider it in their work. Ms. Gibbs agreed that these were key questions, and the crux of the issue, which would need to be figured out before the panel could make a recommendation. She asserted that the panel would have to think a lot about "where the line is", because in her opinion, the answer would ultimately be about who we are as an institution and who we want to be.

Ms. Stoner added that the panel would also need to think about how to transcribe that idea in a document other people would be interpreting.

Ms. Gibbs asserted that they would also need to develop something that takes into account the ever evolving/changing issues.

Dr. Moore commented that he was finding himself more and more overwhelmed with the scope of the task and what he perceived to be the time frame they were working in.

Ms. Gibbs assured the panel that the message she was getting from President Thrasher, was to take the necessary time, and that as long as they were making progress, she didn't think anyone would question the time being taken. She recognized that they wanted their meetings to feel productive, and that this would require her continued efforts to be deliberate when drafting their agendas, but cautioned against rushing to meet an artificial deadline.

Norman Anderson opinion that the panel was getting overwhelmed by all the factors presented at each meeting and recommended that they take some time to think about their charge to determine what steps they would need to take to fulfill it. He asserted that they needed to operationalize their charge by getting more specific about what they need to do and what they would need to accomplish those tasks/goals.

Ms. Gibbs affirmed that Dr. Anderson had a good point and proposed that the panel spend some time on that at the next meeting. She also offered to seek guidance from President Thrasher regarding the specifics of his charge to ensure that the panel was productive going forward.

Ms. Stoner opined that reviewing the buildings was a part of applying or implementing the policy, and that the panel should use this task as a way to test their recommendation for an updated or new policy, which would need to come first.

Mr. Hernandez commented that the panel had a great opportunity to educate the community. He suggested being intentional about how they recommended changes be made, that the panel share what they were leaning, using it as a tool, and ensuring history was not diminished.

Dr. Moore made an observation that thus far the panel had been spending more time learning about individual buildings, rather than reviewing the policy, and asserted that they might want to think about the order of things.

Ms. Gibbs asked if the panel was in agreement about focusing on the policy first.

Chris Pinango indicated that he agreed and added that focusing on whether or not to change the name of an individual building wasn't as efficient as finding a method of determination that could be applied to any building on campus.

Karen Bearor asserted that the panel needed to be conscious of the urgency that could be created based on what other universities were doing, and that the community may see them as lagging behind if they postponed addressing specific issues until after the policy was changed.

Ms. Stoner stated that she had needed to see some of these examples to be able think about the policy, but that she would feel better about making the decision to change a building's name after they had established a consistent policy, which would enable them to identify a "why", or point to a reason for the decision. She added that as long as the panel was showing progress, she hoped that they could keep faith with the community.

Mr. Hernandez noted that while other Universities seemed to be changing one building or statue that has caused controversy, he would rather be on the side of the doing a thorough job, as he believed that it would have a much stronger outcome for FSU.

Ms. Gibbs agreed with Ms. Stoner's point about how having an idea of what the issues or controversy may be, would help the panel build a better policy, and added that she loved the idea of testing a draft/proposed policy on a specific building, but recognized that understanding the issues and pivoting to work on the policy would be a balancing act.

Dr. Anderson suggested that a presentation on how other Universities have addressed things from a policy standpoint might be helpful, and that the panel should spend some time thinking about FSU's core values, as policy changes should be consistent with those.

Dr. Montgomery commented that it would important to consider an underlying philosophy and that it must be something that would stand the test of time.

## 5. Update Report on Other Institutions

Ms. Gibbs moved to the next agenda item, giving Robyn Jackson the floor for her update report.

Ms. Jackson thanks Ms. Gibbs for the opportunity to share, and referencing the update/articles provided to the panel before the Winter Break, she summarized that many universities across the nation were dealing with different, but related issues and that they were at different places in the process of addressing them.

She went on to explain that while everyone was taking on the similar types of “hard work”, they were ultimately producing a variety of different responses, which were influenced by specific campus cultures. Ms. Jackson outlined the following examples of how universities and or cities were addressing controversial monuments or statues:

- Removing the monument, sometimes in the middle of the night;
- Erecting an additional monument;
- Providing context to existing monuments or structures, such as in the form of a pamphlet or plaque;
- Having not been persuaded to take them down, leaving the monument or statue as they are, and choosing to accept the painful parts of history;
- Draping a monument or statute with a bronze cover, leaving only an outline visible;
- And in Memphis, where a city ordinance wouldn't allow monuments on city property to be removed, the city sold small parcels of land to individual people as a loophole.

Ms. Jackson noted that the article she had provided regarding “Silent Sam” was very long, but that it outlined a lot of different information and views on the historical significance of the same statue, showing how important it would be to vet information before using it to make a decision.

Ms. Jackson concluded her update by stating that the solutions she had found showed a lot of creativity, but that she wasn't sure whether any of them were right for FSU, and that the panel would need to consider what might be best for us and our institution.

Ms. Gibbs thanked Ms. Jackson, stating that it was very helpful for the panel to stay up to date on what other institutions are doing.

## 6. Next Meeting Agenda

Ms. Gibbs indicated that while the intention had been to schedule the panel meetings a few months out, there had not been a lot of success due to the panel's dynamic schedules, but shared that the next two meeting dates being looked at were February 2, 2018 and February 14, 2018. She specified that Danni Staats would be in touch, and asked the panel to respond as quickly as possible when Ms. Staats requested information regarding their availability.

Ms. Gibbs stated that having noted all of the items the panel mentioned wanting to hear more about, she would be giving some thought to what works for the next agenda, but reminded the panel that they would need to keep an eye on where the town halls would be placed and noting that she saw them happening sooner than later, inquired as to what they were thinking in regards to timing.

Andrew Melville responded from the perspective of the students, indicating that they wanted to be involved, and that he agreed with having the town halls sooner than later.

Ms. Gibbs reiterated the commitment made by the panel to solicit in depth feedback before making any type of recommendation, in support of her position that the town halls should happen before the panel proceeded with developing any type of policy or recommendation for a policy.

Ms. Jackson inquired as to whether the panel thought there would be a point they could propose a list of buildings they were interested in looking at to the community requesting feedback on anything that might be missing. She clarified that she wasn't sure the panel was at that point, but that the approach might make the town halls more structured and efficient.

Dr. Anderson indicated that he liked Ms. Jackson's idea and added that he would want to have questions to pose to the community. He acknowledged that the panel would want to hear everything the speakers had to share, but maintained that the panel would also want to provide guidance regarding what they wanted to hear about, and proposed that they may want to ask for recommendations on both the list and the policy.

Mr. Hernandez asserted that if Dr. Anderson's vision was to have multiple opportunities for constituents to share, he agreed with the idea, and that he was also in support of having the town halls sooner than later. He also suggested that the panel make a point of inviting the residents of any building that they are specifically considering for a change.

Ms. Gibbs agreed that it was in-line with the panel's charge to provide multiple opportunities to engage the community and added that she saw the town halls taking place somewhere else [besides Turnbull] that provided easier access on campus. She stated that she also liked Mr. Hernandez's idea of inviting those that would be impacted by a change the panel was considering for a specific building. Ms. Gibbs outlined that the feedback she had received from the panel was that they wanted more information on buildings and statues, more specific information on their charge, and to spend time on establishing an organized action plan at the next meeting.

Mr. Doney inquired as to whether a survey could be developed for those constituents that couldn't make it to campus, such as alumni.

Ms. Gibbs noted that there was currently an option for submitting feedback on the website, but recalling that the panel had talked early on about engaging certain groups, such as alumni, agreed that a survey would be in support of reaching out to those groups.

Allisson Yu suggested that the panel might want to make it clear to the town hall participants that things may not ultimately go the way they feel it should go and that the panel should think about how they frame those expectations appropriately.

Ms. Gibbs added that the panel would also want to make sure that the constituents understood the panel's timeline and the different steps of the process, stating that it would be important to frame that information honestly and openly.

Dr. Moore mentioned reading about restrictions that other universities were faced with in regards to changing the name of a certain building and asked if this might come up for any of the buildings on campus.

Ms. Gibbs responded that Roberts Hall [Main building for the Law School] had been named as a result of legislative action, and that for this reason the University didn't have the authority to change the building's name. She asserted that she wasn't aware of any other situations like that, but indicated that she would find out more about where the university had autonomy and didn't.

Dr. Montgomery started that she liked the idea of moving the town halls to a more central location on campus, and proposed that the panel might also need to consider moving the time and/or day of the week as well, possibly scheduling a weekend date.

Ms. Gibbs agreed and noted the suggestion for consideration.

Mr. Melville asked if Ms. Varry's PowerPoint would be made available.

Ms. Gibbs confirmed that a copy would be sent to the panel.

Dr. Anderson asked about the procedure for drafting a proposal, such as a new or amended policy, and whether the panel would need to draft those documents during their meetings.

Ms. Jackson offered that the panel would most likely discuss their ideas during the meetings, but then follow-up by submitting recommendations to the support staff, who would maintain one copy of the document that reflected all of those various changes.

Carolyn Egan, Florida State University General Counsel, stated if the panel members had ideas on policy language, they could email them to Elizabeth Hirst.

Ms. Gibbs clarified that the panel could also reach out to Ms. Staats, as she has been the point of contact.

#### 7. Other Business

No other business.

#### 8. Adjourn

Ms. Gibbs thanked everyone for their time and asked the panel to reach out to Ms. Staats with any questions or requests they may have.

**The meeting ended at 10:33 a.m.**

MEMORANDUM

**Date:** January 12, 2018

**To:** Members of the FSU President's Advisory Panel on University Namings and Recognitions

**From:** Danni Vogt *Danni*

**Re:** Website with information on B.K. Roberts Hall

I hope this memo finds you doing well and thanks for your work on the important subject of whether to rename FSU buildings. In order to help the committee arrive at an informed recommendation, I have created a website with information about B.K. Roberts Hall, the main classroom building at the College of Law. I have done extensive research on this subject and have spoken with numerous FSU law school alumni and people who worked with B.K. Roberts, including some who were with him on the committee to establish the law school in the 1960s. I also have done a lot of legal research and collected the cases B.K. Roberts wrote in the 1950s that blocked Virgil Hawkins from attending law school at the University of Florida because he was black. I have put this information on the website which can be found at <https://www.renamebkrobertshallnow.org/>.

While I am in favor of renaming the law school, I have taken steps to include both sides of the story on the website. There you will find factual and background information about B.K. Roberts and an explanation of why his name was placed on the building in the first place, as well as historic and legal information discussing why many people think his name on the building today is inappropriate. There is also space for visitors to make comments and I will furnish these to the committee at future meetings.

Thank you for considering renaming B.K. Roberts Hall and please visit the website. If I can assist the committee in any other way please do not hesitate to ask. I can be reached at [dannivogt@comcast.net](mailto:dannivogt@comcast.net).