



FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

MEMORANDUM

To: President John Thrasher

From: Renisha Gibbs
Chair, President's Advisory Panel on University Namings and Recognitions
Associate Vice President for Human Resources and Chief Diversity Officer

Date: July 12, 2018

Subject: Panel Recommendations for B.K. Roberts Hall, Francis Eppes Hall, and the Francis Eppes Statue

In fall 2017, you appointed a 15-member panel comprised of University students, faculty, staff, administrators, and alumni to listen, learn, and make recommendations on policies concerning campus names, including buildings and statues.

Members of the panel included:

Renisha Gibbs, Panel Chair
Norman Anderson, Faculty
Karen Bearor, Faculty
Kyle Doney, Alumnus
Lane Forsman, Student
Miguel Hernandez, Staff/Student
Kyle Hill, Student
Robyn Jackson, Staff
Maxine Jones, Faculty
Andrew Melville, Student
Maxine Montgomery, Faculty
Walter Moore, Faculty (Retired)
Christopher Pinango, Student
Janet Stoner, Alumna
Allisson Yu, Alumna

The panel convened for the first time in October 2017 to begin this very important work. During the first meeting, you addressed the panel to outline your specific expectations with regard to our charge, which included: researching the issues, meeting and engaging with University constituencies to seek input and feedback, determining criteria for appropriate naming policies, and making any other recommendations deemed necessary.

Over the next few months, the panel examined current university policies concerning campus names and markers, including statues and other recognitions. Panel members took a considerable amount of time on their own to become educated on the subject by thoroughly reviewing applicable materials, such as the University's current Naming Policy, the naming policies and practices being used by other institutions of higher education, and numerous articles that detailed the actions taken by universities and municipalities facing similar tasks across the nation.

In addition, the panel convened regularly in open forums that were advertised to the campus and external community to discuss the aforementioned materials, hear presentations made by historians, archivists, and other subject matter experts, and listen to feedback given by various members of the University community in the form of public comments. University constituencies who were unable to attend and/or declined to comment publicly were encouraged to submit their feedback anonymously via an option made available on the panel's website.

Narrowing of the Charge

You recognized, as we did, that there were members of our community who felt very passionately about three campus landmarks in particular. As a result, and in an attempt to be responsive to campus concerns, on February 2, 2018, you asked the panel to prioritize an evaluation of B.K. Roberts Hall, Francis Eppes Hall, and the Francis Eppes statue as we continued our work.

Process

As the panel moved forward to consider the priorities identified, input was sought from the entire University, including students, faculty, staff, alumni, and members of our local community. The panel hosted five town hall meetings at various locations and times in an effort to hear from as many interested parties as possible.

Town hall attendees were asked the following questions:

- *What impact have these landmarks had on you and/or others? What message do you and/or others think these landmarks are communicating?*
- *What role should University history play in our current day campus environment?*
- *What do you think should be done and why (i.e., suggestions for solutions)? Are there additional options besides removing and/or renaming?*

The panel was committed to all of its work being open, deliberate, comprehensive, accurate, and inclusive. In addition to the five aforementioned town hall meetings, a total of nine panel meetings were held over six months. When possible, the panel focused on fact-finding and analysis with an eye towards primary sources using facts that could be established via reliable historical evidence. The panel engaged in a significant amount of analysis aimed at separating verifiable facts from anecdotes. To that end, subject matter experts were identified and invited to present to the panel and public comment sessions were included in every panel meeting wherein any individual was welcome to present evidence or opinion. The panel heard from six invited speakers and many

members of the public who appeared to address the panel. Included in one public comment session was a retired justice of the Florida Supreme Court.

Public Comments during panel meetings/town halls: 74

Comments submitted to the panel website: 183

Principles

After careful consideration and considerable research, the following principles were adopted to guide the panel through its discussion of the three issues currently under consideration and for guidance in future decision-making.

- Presumption – Requests should be reviewed with a strong bias toward maintaining a naming or recognition. Renaming and/or removal of recognition should only be considered in exceptional circumstances.
- Is a prominent legacy of the namesake (honoree) fundamentally at odds with the current values or the mission of the University?
- Was the relevant prominent legacy significantly contested in the time in which the namesake lived?
- Did the University, at the time of a naming, honor a namesake for reasons that are fundamentally at odds with the current values or mission of the University?
- Were the reason(s) provided as justification for honoring the namesake reasonably substantiated based on the records and information available at the time? Since then, have new records of relevance been discovered that discredited, contextualized, and/or shed new light on the information previously available and/or the justification for the recognition? Given that history, do the contributions of the namesake to the University justify the recognition that currently exists?
- Does the building or other recognition play a substantial role in constructing or dismantling community at the University?
- Is the honorific recognition of the namesake having a significantly adverse impact on members of our current University community or the community at large?
- Does the manner in which the recognition is currently being displayed provide sufficient historical contextualization so as to advance the University's educational mission?

It is the intent of the panel that these principles be long-lasting as future honorific opportunities are considered by the University. As such, it is the recommendation that these principles be incorporated into the University's naming policy. The panel also suggests that one of its current members be included on the Committee on Campus Names going forward. The panel members are steeped in expertise at this point and I am certain that the panel members stand willing to serve the University in that capacity.

Actions to be Considered

With respect to the three recognitions currently under consideration by the panel, the following options, as well as any potential combinations thereof, were identified and discussed as potential outcomes:

- *Affirm* – Leave recognition (naming or statue) as is; take no additional action.
- *Add* – Add another recognition (naming or statue) separate from the current one (i.e., commissioning an additional statue or purposefully naming another structure/landmark).
- *Contextualize/Modify* – Change existing recognition based on updated, relevant historical records by altering the content and/or the physicality of the current recognition (i.e., provide context in a plaque, history course, campus tour, etc., or modify by covering or altering structure, or adding names).
- *Rename/Remove* – Discard current recognition (naming or statue).
- *Remove and Relocate* – Remove naming and recognize the individual elsewhere; remove statue and place elsewhere.
- *Remove and retire* – Remove name and retire recognition. Retirement would acknowledge the recognition as positive but also indicate that it may not be relevant in the current environment.

Recommendations

B.K. Roberts Hall

The panel recommends that the University administration seek legislative action to legally remove B. K. Roberts's name from the law school building and alternatively provide some form of contextualized recognition of B.K. Roberts somewhere within the Law School.

The panel scheduled a two-hour town hall meeting at the College of Law to provide a forum for participation by students, faculty, staff, alumni, members of the community, and anyone else interested in the B.K. Roberts building name. This session was well attended and the panel heard from approximately 17 speakers, the vast majority of whom were current students of the College of Law. It is abundantly clear from both the attendance level and extent of student engagement at the town hall meeting that the B.K. Roberts Building name is an issue of significant and ongoing impact on the law school community. The law school students should be commended for both their engagement and for the civility and professionalism with which they have conducted themselves while discussing this very challenging topic. It was essential to the panel's work to hear the various perspectives of the law school community, which were varied and well presented.

It is undisputed that former Chief Justice Roberts made significant contributions to the legal system as a whole and was instrumental in the creation of the College of Law. These facts should not go unrecognized. However, the application of the principles stated above led the panel to definitively conclude that the law school community is not well served by continuing the B. K. Roberts name in as prominent and honorific a role as the current building name.

Moreover, the College of Law aspires to instill in its students a strong sense of professionalism and respect for the rule of law and the court system. The College of Law's core curriculum includes a required course in professional responsibility, and the ethical responsibilities of practicing attorneys is an integral part of the law school curriculum. It cannot be said that violating an order in open defiance of the United States Supreme Court exemplifies this core mission of the College of Law. It is even more significant that years later, the Florida Supreme Court felt compelled to issue a formal apology for Justice Robert's actions relating to the Virgil Hawkins case, something it has never done before or since then.

Francis Eppes Hall/Francis Eppes Statue

The panel recommends that Francis Eppes' name be removed from the College of Criminology building and that an educational/historical record of the building having previously been named for Eppes be provided somewhere on campus. The record would include an outline of the panel's process for reviewing the recognition and the reasoning for our recommendation that Eppes' name be removed.

The panel recommends that the Francis Eppes Statue be removed and curated in a historically accurate manner and replaced with a more complete and historically accurate recognition of the University's founders, the participation of slavery in the construction of the University, and the Seminole Tribe or other First Nation people.

In reviewing the historical record relating to Francis Eppes, our research confirmed that he was a prominent citizen, community leader, four-time (intendant) mayor of Tallahassee, and grandson of Thomas Jefferson. Historical records also documented other aspects of Eppes' life, including his ownership of slaves at both of his Florida plantations and his service as Justice of the Peace in Tallahassee, for which his duties would have included establishing "frontier" law and order for the area and patrols for escaped slaves. Recognizing the vastly different social norms of Eppes' time, our recommendation was not solely influenced by these previously understood facts alone. Additional information shed a different light on the role Francis Eppes played in the founding of our University and brings into question the justification for his recognition. An accurate representation of the University's founding became a key determining factor to panel members.

Through the course of our research, we found that Eppes is not credited with, nor does he ever claim responsibility for, establishing the Seminary that evolved into the University we know today. Based on the historical records currently available and presentations regarding said documentation, Eppes worked with a group of leaders in 1836 to petition Congress to create an institution of higher education in the area. He was also part of the group that successfully tried again in 1856, proposing to the Legislature to establish a Seminary West of the Suwanee, offering a building, \$10,000 in cash, and an annual endowment. It is also significant to note that when former FSU President Sandy D'Alemberte addressed the panel, he indicated that he had not vetted the information that had been provided to him with regard to Eppes' proposed recognition. Former President D'Alemberte noted that he should have conducted his own research and agreed that he had inaccurately identified Francis Eppes as the "founder" of FSU. Upon further review and

consideration of the information available to us, it is the Panel's belief that Eppes should still be recognized, but in a manner that is consistent with an accurate representation of his contributions.

Conclusion

Diversity, respect and inclusion are at the very core of all that we do at Florida State University. With these key values in mind and the aforementioned principles, the panel appreciates the opportunity to weigh in on this important issue as representatives of our campus community.

We recognize the significance of the above recommendations and the consideration that must be given to all related issues. We look forward to supporting you and your leadership team on any next steps.