



FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

**PRESIDENT'S TASK FORCE ON ANTI-RACISM, EQUITY & INCLUSION  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HISTORICAL LEGACY**

**MINUTES**

**December 2, 2020 | 3:00 p.m.**

**Zoom Webinar**

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Members Participating: Cortez Brown, Miles Feacher, Stacey Hardin, Nastassia Janvier, Cassandra Jenkins, Maxine Jones, Kevin Rutois

**I. Call to Order and Welcome** **Maxine Jones, Subcommittee Chair**

Chair Maxine Jones called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. Jimmy Cole conducted the roll call and confirmed a quorum.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

*November 3, 2020*

Cassandra Jenkins moved to approved the November 3, 2020 meeting minutes. Kyle Doney seconded the motion and the minutes were approved unanimously.

**III. Public Comment**

No public comment was requested during this meeting.

**IV. Subcommittee Chair's Remarks** **Maxine Jones**

Subcommittee Chair Maxine Jones thanked Cassandra Jenkins for providing the Historical Legacy Subcommittee update to the full Task Force at the previous Task Force meeting. Dr. Jones also reviewed the ongoing work of the subcommittee and planned work for Spring 2021.

**V. Subcommittee Member Open Forum**

A full recording of the subcommittee open forum session is available at [president.fsu.edu/taskforce](http://president.fsu.edu/taskforce).



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### **VI. Fall 2020 Recommendations**

**Maxine Jones**

A full recording of the discussion of the Francis Eppes Statue recommendation is available at [president.fsu.edu/taskforce](http://president.fsu.edu/taskforce)

Subcommittee Member Miles Feacher submitted the following recommendation to the subcommittee:

“The panel recommends that the Francis Eppes Statue be removed and curated by the University. The panel recommends the statue not be put on display for public consumption due to the significant evidence against Francis' Eppes role in founding the West Florida Seminary, which caused the statue to be created in 2002. The Eppes Statue has a new meaning closely tied to the results of student activism. The University will not know the legacy of these students' actions for years and even decades, therefore, to move it and put it on public display within months of its removal would do a disservice to the hard work and new meaning to the object and community. As per the previous recommendation made in 2018, it is imperative that the university work to embrace and embolden the voices of those who belong to the oppressed and historically silenced communities, including the African American, Seminole and other First Nation communities.

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. However, per a presentation by Dr. Koslow, we were able to confirm a building integral to the establishment of the West Florida Seminary was constructed by enslaved people. 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



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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."

The final language of the approved recommendation is:

"The Historical Legacy Subcommittee recommends that the Francis Eppes Statue be Permanently 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 enslaved people in the construction of the University, and the Seminole Tribe or other First Nation people."

Cassandra Jenkins moved to approve the above recommendation. Cortez Brown seconded the motion and the recommendation was approved unanimously.

The subcommittee discussed planned work for the Spring 2021 semester.

## **VII. Adjourn**

Chair Jones adjourned the meeting at 4:04 p.m.

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