

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL
BOARD OF TRUSTEES' POLICY FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF THE REMOVAL OF NAMES ON
UNIVERSITY BUILDINGS AND PUBLIC SPACES

I.

PREAMBLE

The names that our University attaches to buildings and public spaces make a statement about the values we wish to lift up for emulation and pass on to successive generations. As the nation's first public institution of higher education, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has a responsibility to promote equal opportunity and equal access for all. To that end, we must endeavor to shape a student body, staff, and professoriate, curriculum and agenda for research, artistic creativity, and civic engagement that reflects and honors the full, rich diversity of human experience and thought. We hold fast to our convictions and we trust that constantly striving to be a more just, tolerant, and equitable institution makes us a stronger University and positions us to build a better future for the people of North Carolina, the nation, and the world.

In order to be a place where inclusive transformation is valued, we must be willing to submit our history and traditions to scrutiny and thoughtful assessment consistent with high standards of integrity and free and open inquiry and debate. Upholding our values includes an openness to changing or otherwise contextualizing names that were attached to campus buildings or public spaces by prior stewards of the University whose values may, in contemporary circumstances, undercut Carolina's mission which is to serve as a center for research, scholarship, and creativity and to teach a diverse community of undergraduate, graduate, and professional students to become the next generation of leaders.

Removing a naming designation is a serious step that cannot be taken lightly or hastily. It should occur only under exceptional and narrow circumstances. This policy is designed to guide that process.

II.

PROCESS FOR SUBMITTING A WRITTEN REQUEST FOR REMOVAL

The process for deciding whether to remove a naming designation should reflect a consistent set of standards, a careful and deliberate balancing process, and an acknowledgement of the complex intersection between the lessons of our past and present, the lived and learned experiences from that time to present day, and the contemporary mission of the University. The Chancellor or Board of Trustees may begin the process of reconsidering the name on a University building or other public space at their own initiative or in response to a written request to the Chancellor.

A written request to the Chancellor requesting the removal of a name should include:

- The specific conduct by the namesake of the campus building or public space that jeopardizes the University's integrity, mission or values.

- The character of the named individual and the extent of the harm to the University caused by continuing to honor the namesake.
- The sources and strength of the evidence that supports the allegation(s) of the harm.
- Alignment of the allegation with the principles detailed below.

At the Chancellor’s discretion, the Chancellor will refer a written request for removal of a name to a committee appointed by the Chancellor, which shall include members of the Board of Trustees, alumni, faculty, staff and students of the University, to investigate the claims and provide a written report back to the Chancellor in a timely manner that adheres to the standards of free and open inquiry as well as discourse and debate, which are appropriate for an institution of higher education.

As part of the written report, the committee may invite comments from all interested members of the University community, on or off campus, including the original honoree or their heirs, and treat the process as an opportunity for community-wide learning even as the committee addresses wrongdoing. Where helpful, those on the committee should take advantage of the knowledge and methodologies of the social sciences, humanities, law, and other disciplines, and they should ensure that the inquiry itself not exacerbate the harms that are being considered, appropriately considering varying viewpoints within the University community.

The Chancellor will review the report, the strength of the scholarly historical evidence, and the principles outlined below in deciding whether to formally request that the Board of Trustees consider the request for removal.

In the event the Chancellor determines that the request to remove the name does warrant a formal request to the Board of Trustees, the Chancellor will (i) provide a formal request to the Board of Trustees in advance of the meeting during which the Chancellor requests action to be taken; and (ii) provide the Board of Trustees the report supporting the Chancellor’s request.

In the event that the Chancellor determines that the request to remove a name does not warrant a formal request to the Board of Trustees, the Chancellor will: (i) provide a response explaining the decision to the requesting party; and (ii) initiate appropriate action if the University community would benefit from increased contextualization in connection with the campus building or public space.

III.

PRINCIPLES FOR EVALUATING A WRITTEN REQUEST FOR REMOVAL

The University must assure that any requests to remove a name from a University building or public space are the result of a consistent approach to weighing and balancing the relevant factors and aforementioned principles. Written requests for removing a name are more compelling when the scholarly historical evidence is clear and convincing and when they satisfy one or more of the following criteria:

- The namesake was found to have committed a serious violation of a state or U.S. law prior to or during that individual's lifetime following the naming recognition.
- The repugnant conduct in question was central to a namesake's career, public persona, or life as a whole.
- Allegations of repugnant behavior are supported by documentary evidence that demonstrates both the extent and the intentionality of a namesake's actions.
- Honoring a namesake demonstrably jeopardizes the University's integrity and materially impedes its mission of teaching, research, and public engagement; or significantly contributes to an environment that excludes some members of the University community from opportunities to learn, thrive, and succeed.
- The removal of the name would not stifle viewpoint diversity or fail to acknowledge the historical complexity or holistic contributions of the individual to the University or the public.

Written requests for removing a name are **weaker** when one or more of the following elements are present:

- The namesake's offensive behavior or viewpoints were conventional at its time and other aspects of the namesake's life and work are especially noteworthy to the University or the greater community.
- Despite the evidence of objectionable behavior or views, there is also evidence of significant level of evolution or moderation of the namesake's behavior and/or views.

Opportunities for contextualization, education, and preservation of historical knowledge to advance the University's mission and values must be considered in any final determination on the potential removal and/or renaming of a University building or public space.