

UVA: The President's Commission on the University in the age of Segregation

<https://protect2.fireeye.com/v1/url?k=8e86eee2-d0095b92-8e86a023-8658c81e29af-06d75d7bfeb8ba96&q=1&e=bd93450d-39d3-4fe7-ad7c-ccb822903ac3&u=https%3A%2F%2Fsegregation.virginia.edu%2Fmemorialization-and-mission%2F>

Memorialization and Mission

Our Grounds should embody our history, our mission, and our values

The President's Commission on the University in the Age of Segregation (PCUAS) began deliberations in early 2019 regarding the built landscape at UVA. The discussion centered around guiding principles and a clear process for considering the built and named landscape—buildings, memorials, monuments, plazas, fields, and the like. How might we reconsider those places and spaces and make decisions about whether to rename, remove, or recontextualize them? The Memorialization on Grounds Committee took on the task of creating just such a set of principles and process. What follows is from the introduction to that PCUAS committee's fine work in expressing a coherent set of guiding principles and outlining a clear process for doing so. We submitted it to President Ryan earlier this year and now share it publicly for your consideration. The full report is available [here](#).

The University of Virginia's mission statement, adopted by the Board of Visitors in 2013, makes clear UVA's "unwavering support of a collaborative, diverse community bound together by distinctive foundational values of honor, integrity, trust, and respect."

Those values are conveyed through the policies the University enacts, the programs and courses it offers, the students it graduates, the faculty and staff it hires — and, not least, in the names the University inscribes above the entrances to its buildings and the people it honors with statuary and monuments.

Yet the University's Grounds are in fact marked with disturbing memorials and building names honoring various Confederates, slaveholders, eugenicists, and segregationists who not only shared the racism common among whites in their eras but actively promoted white supremacist ideologies. This inherited tradition, rafted on a Lost Cause mythology that argued that slavery was benign, that the Civil War was about state sovereignty, and that the postwar experiment in black citizenship was a failure, has come under increasing—and increasingly public—scrutiny.^[1]

The misalignment between our inherited landscape and our current mission and values is a topic of increasingly public conversation. The editorial staff of the student newspaper argued that the university must disavow its association with one of our leading eugenicists.^[2] A recent petition calls for the removal of the George Rogers Clark monument.^[3] The Curry School of Education is actively reconsidering its namesake and the man honored by one of its building names.^[4] Students have launched a campaign to rename Alderman Library.^[5] These efforts have recently cohered in the establishment of a student committee actively working to examine

the troubling history of monuments, buildings, and sites across Grounds.[6] And in a long tradition of advocating for change, students have also argued for greater recognition of sites associated with UVA's history of slavery.[7]

It is the central conviction of our committee that architecture and landscape is a cultural product and historic buildings and their names embody the history and tradition—the culture—of the University of Virginia.[8] When our inherited buildings and their names are in direct conflict with our current mission and values, the University is obligated to respond. The decision to rename, remove, recontextualize, or let remain is one of the many choices we make to ensure alignment of our culture with our values. Failing to do so corrupts our long-standing commitment to honor and integrity.

[1] Elizabeth R. Varon, "UVA and the History of Race: The Lost Cause Through Judge Duke's Eyes," *UVA Today*, 9/4/2019. As a good overview of slavery at UVA, see Jennifer Oast, *Institutional Slavery: Slaveholding Churches, Schools, Colleges, and Businesses in Virginia, 1680-1860* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 175-240.

[2] Editorial Board, "The University's hospital must disavow Paul Barringer and his legacy." *The Cavalier Daily*, 2/13/2019.

[3] Bridget Starrs, "Local petition calls for U.Va. to remove George Rogers Clark status," *The Cavalier Daily* 8/2/2019.

[4] Patrick Roney, "Curry School launches website about school namesakes," *The Cavalier Daily*, 11/20/2019.

[5] Zach Rosenthal, "Flier posted around Grounds advocates for renaming of Alderman Library." *The Cavalier Daily*, 9/18/2019.

[6] Katja Cresanti and Geremia Di Maro, "Student Council passes bill to create ad hoc committee to examine the history of monuments, buildings and historical areas on grounds." *The Cavalier Daily*, 4/18/2019.

[7] Lydia Willcocks, "Interpretive panels placed in recognition of Gooch-Dillard cemetery," *The Cavalier Daily*, 11/13/2019. Slavery at the University of Virginia: Visitor's Guide (Charlottesville, Virginia: Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia, 2013) [brochure]

[8] These convictions are confirmed by a wide range of disciplines including architectural history, cultural landscapes studies, memory studies, and vernacular architecture to name just a few. Scholarship undergirding this framework appears in a number of journals including *Buildings and Landscapes*, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, *Memory Studies*, and *Journal of Cultural Geography* among others.

Memorialization and Mission: PCUAS June 2020 Committee Report

Memorialization and Mission at UVA

Our Grounds should embody our history, our mission, and our values

Submitted to President James E. Ryan March, 2020

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I. Introduction

The University of Virginia’s mission statement, adopted by the Board of Visitors in 2013, makes clear UVA’s “unwavering support of a collaborative, diverse community bound together by distinctive foundational values of honor, integrity, trust, and respect.”

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The misalignment between our inherited landscape and our current mission and values is a topic of increasingly public conversation. The editorial staff of the student newspaper argued that the university must disavow its association with one of our leading eugenicists.² A recent petition calls for the removal of the George Rogers Clark monument.³ The Curry School of Education is actively reconsidering its namesake and the man honored by one of its building names.⁴ Students have launched a campaign to rename Alderman Library.⁵ These efforts have recently cohered in the establishment of a student committee actively working to examine the troubling history of monuments, buildings, and sites across Grounds.⁶ And in a long tradition of advocating for change, students have also argued for greater recognition of sites associated with UVA’s history of slavery.⁷

It is the central conviction of our committee that architecture and landscape is a cultural product and historic buildings and their names embody the history and tradition—the culture—of the University of Virginia.⁸ When our inherited buildings and their names are in direct conflict with our current mission and values, the University is obligated to respond. The decision to rename, remove, recontextualize, or let remain is one of

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Recent Renamings

In recent years, the University community has undertaken a searching re-examination of the shameful foundations of discrimination upon which much of UVA was built. This intellectual ferment—driven by the rigorous research, passionate engagement, and sense of civic responsibility among UVA undergraduates, faculty, staff, and administration and local Charlottesville scholars and community leaders—has established UVA as a leader, nationally and internationally, of the process by which educational institutions reckon with the past. After the events of the summer of 2017, a Deans Working Group charged to consider the University’s response established an Advisory Committee on the Future of the Historic Landscape at the University of Virginia. This document builds on the strong foundation established in that committee’s report.⁹ But it is also important to recognize that these conversations have a much longer history.

The President’s Commission on Slavery and the University (established in 2013) has worked to recover the experiences of enslaved laborers at UVA and to make information about that history public and accessible. With construction of the new Memorial to Enslaved Laborers on UVA’s campus, the publication of the multi-author *Educated in Tyranny: Slavery at Thomas Jefferson’s University*, and with the UVA-founded Universities Studying Slavery consortium now including 62 other universities and colleges in five countries, UVA is at the heart of a multi-institutional, collaborative, international effort to confront the history and legacies of slavery. In the same spirit, the follow-on President’s Commission on the University in the Age of Segregation (PCUAS) has begun to train attention on the more recent past. This commission, like the earlier one, is committed to a project of recovering hidden and submerged histories and has already yielded a wealth of new insights into both historic patterns of structural discrimination at UVA and efforts at UVA, by pioneering individuals and organizations alike, to combat discrimination and thus reinvigorate, broaden, and modernize the University’s core mission. The response by students, faculty, staff, and the community to these initiatives has been overwhelmingly positive and supportive. They recognize that UVA’s deep complicity in America’s history of discrimination requires acknowledging its responsibility in the modern day: the duty to offer unflinching scholarly analysis of our complex past, in the spirit of securing a just and equitable present and future.

As part of this ongoing process of informed self-reflection, various ad hoc groups have urged reconsideration of some of UVA’s problematic statues and building names. For example, the School of Medicine’s Jordan Hall, named for a noted eugenicist and former medical school dean, was rededicated to honor Dr. Vivian Pinn, the only African American and the only woman in her 1967 UVA medical school class. The UVA Hospital’s Barringer Wing, honoring another notorious eugenicist, was renamed for UVA alumnus Dr. Francis S. Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health. A dormitory dedicated to Ivey Foreman Lewis, a eugenicist recruited to UVA by Edwin Alderman, was renamed to honor W.W. Yen, the University’s first graduate from China. And Curry School Dean Robert Pianta has convened an Ad Hoc Naming Review Committee that is currently weighing whether to rename both Ruffner Hall and the Curry School itself.

Colleges and universities across the country have recently travelled similar paths. In 2016, Yale renamed a residential college honoring U.S. Vice President John C. Calhoun, an infamous white supremacist and ardent

⁹ <https://response.virginia.edu/documents>

defender of slavery. Yale’s initial decision not to change the name triggered a major controversy, after which the university engaged in an extensive naming policy review that offers thoughtful perspective and background that has been useful in our own work here at UVA. At Harvard Law School, officials replaced a shield that was the family crest of slaveowners. Ten days after the murderous “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, the University of Texas quietly and overnight uninstalled four statues of men directly associated with the Confederacy. Both the University of Texas and the University of North Carolina have renamed buildings that had honored leaders of the Ku Klux Klan. And most recently, the University of Cincinnati, after extensive review, decided to remove the name of Charles McMicken, a slave owner and trader who founded the university “for the education of white Boys and Girls.” Universities across the country are awakening to the challenges of reconciling inherited traditions of white supremacy with their modern missions to value diversity and inclusion. The 2016 Yale report and the 2019 Cincinnati report are the most comprehensive of these assessments to date and this document draws inspiration from and is in broad alignment with both. An appendix at the end of this document includes a comprehensive list of policies that seek to address removal, recontextualization, and renaming policies at American and international universities.

Reconsideration

It should be noted that critics of removal or renaming initiatives proffer some important arguments. They contend that removing monuments or names from buildings can have the effect of “erasing history” at the very institutions charged with preserving, interpreting, and expanding knowledge for future generations—and that maintaining difficult names and monuments can serve as a living reminder of wrong-headed and dangerous ideas from the past.¹⁰

Critics also argue that historical figures should be judged according to the prevailing beliefs of the times in which they lived, not measured against today’s moral standards. And they caution that the hasty undoing of past naming decisions or the removal of historical monuments can license future generations to question the moral standards of our current memorializing.¹¹

¹⁰ An important example of this argument was made by professor of higher education and public policy at the University of Kentucky: John Thelin, “The Campus Buildings Name Game: Unfinished Business,” *Inside Higher Education* (online) 2/27/2017. <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2017/02/27/complexity-removing-names-controversial-people-campus-buildings-essay>. Carol Holt, Chancellor of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, made the argument that although the Silent Sam statue should be relocated, its history was different for different viewers and that those who wished to commemorate their fallen should be allowed that opportunity. <https://www.unc.edu/posts/2018/08/31/message-from-chancellor-folt-on-future-of-monument/>. University of Oregon President Michael Schill made a similar argument regarding a building on that campus named for a Confederate soldier. More recently, President Ed Ray changed course and decided to change the namesakes of three buildings. https://leadership.oregonstate.edu/sites/leadership.oregonstate.edu/files/OID/BuildingPlaceNames/Historical-Reports/arnold_dining_center_historical_report.pdf https://www.dailyemerald.com/archives/hawthorne-hall-a-confederate-legacy/article_a7df34b4-4bc1-5e5c-ab17-ddfcdb83f1d9.html <https://leadership.oregonstate.edu/president/president-ray-announces-building-names-decisions> <https://around.uoregon.edu/content/president-announces-deady-hall-decision-new-cultural-center> <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/are-removing-confederate-monuments-erasing-history-n750526>

¹¹ David Greenberg, professor of history and journalism and media studies at Rutgers, made this argument in 2015: <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/12/university-protests-renaming-wilson-jefferson-jackson-213477>. Civil War historian and Harvard President Drew Gilpin Faust also made a similar argument in 2015.

They further argue that the choice to rename or remove relies on assumptions of human progress—that it is our work to ensure that the present and the future are “better” than the past. Scholars who take this view argue that not only is the argument for inexorable human progress false, it is arrogant.¹²

Those arguments, however, ought to be weighed against equally compelling reasoning in favor of reconsidering monuments and building names—reasoning that starts with the various harm—psychic and economic at least—caused to the diverse members of today’s University community. More recent research has suggested that localities with surviving Confederate monuments have higher than expected black-white poverty inequality.¹³ The historical legacies of slavery, segregation, and racism are inscribed in the built environment and the regular reminder of those sites detrimentally impacts African Americans who live and work in those spaces. Individuals whose very human dignity was once disregarded are daily compelled to live and work in or near buildings and memorials named for white supremacists who represented racist ideologies and aggressively sought to deprive their fellow citizens of their human rights.

Moreover, judging white supremacists according to the times when they lived — essentially arguing that “they didn’t know any better” — fails to recognize that, throughout American history, there were in fact abolitionists, philosophers, anti-racists, civil rights activists, and other voices of conscience actively countering prevailing justifications for slavery, segregation, eugenics, and forced removals of native peoples. It is simply not true that white supremacy—whether under slavery or segregation—was universally accepted. These change agents—to use the language of the earlier Deans report—are the individuals who should be honored.

As a Southern university shaped by the false creed of the Lost Cause, UVA bears responsibility to tell and embody honest, rigorous, and corrective history. Our history must reflect the sophistication, accountability, transparency, representativeness, and inclusivity of the modern-day historical discipline itself. The Lost Cause mythology so prevalent and enduring at UVA in the aftermath of the Civil War was a memory tradition, crafted by unabashedly racist white Southerners, that passed itself off as history. Most offensively, it asserted that slavery was a benign institution. Historical scholarly consensus counters that slavery was a horrific institution of abuse, exploitation, and brutality. The Lost Cause framework also argued that secession was a constitutional defense of state sovereignty; the wartime emancipation of the slaves was a travesty; the Union victory in the war was a triumph of might over right; and the postwar experiment in black citizenship a failure, necessitating the “redemption” of the South by former Confederates. These politically motivated white supremacist claims failed the test of evidence then as now, yet they remained the defiant and divisive

<https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2016/1/19/faust-name-title-changes/> An argument for recontextualization of notorious racist names was more recently offered to Clemson University:

https://www.postandcourier.com/opinion/commentary/scoppe-why-clemson-won-t-be-renaming-tillman-hall-anytime/article_594b30cc-112a-11ea-b992-b36c3fbb5ee8.html. While this argument has not been extended by scholars in the past few years, several members of the University of Minnesota Board of Regents recently offered this criticism of a report on controversial namesakes on that campus:

<https://www.twincities.com/2019/03/08/umn-regents-criticize-report-calling-for-buildings-to-be-renamed/>

¹² James Robbins, faculty member at both the National Defense University and the Marine Corps University:

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2018/08/02/renaming-austin-progressive-effort-erase-history-confederate-slavery-stature-column/874651002/>

¹³ Heather A. O’Connell (2019): Monuments outlive history: Confederate monuments, the legacy of slavery, and black-white inequality, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, DOI:10.1080/01419870.2019.1635259. The economist Jhacovia Williams is currently working on a study that correlates communities with Confederate street names to black-white economic inequality.

narrative of the white South for at least the century following the Civil War. And while they have been thoroughly discredited in the scholarly literature for decades, they remain current in some circles even to the present. The University of Virginia not only helped to construct the Lost Cause mythology at its genesis but also embraced this false narrative throughout its expansion into a modern research university and well into the 20th Century. As a result, our buildings and their names—many of which date from this era—echo this legacy. Thus, at UVA and at many other Southern universities, the imperative to reconsider building names and the potential removal of honorific or philanthropic names and monuments is not simply a project of change; it must also be an exercise of confession, apology, and truth-telling. At UVA, reconsideration is an essential step toward acknowledging the University’s deep institutional complicity in purveying racist doctrines that harmed people of color. Reconsideration is also a step towards emphasizing the role UVA’s current leaders, faculty, and students have played, and must play, in bringing all the evidentiary tools, standards, and sensibilities of modern scholarship to bear on an accurate representation of the past.

This process has already begun across the country and in part here at UVA. The 2017 report of the Deans Working Group has already argued that the University needs to take seriously its responsibilities toward removal, alteration, or renaming of harmful symbols, the contextualization of others, and the addition of new markers in the landscape that tell the stories of change agents. This document agrees with all of the arguments and recommendations from that previous committee, especially the call for reconsideration based on deep historical research; the need to engage open, public, and transparent discussions and processes; and the observation that history and memory are constantly evolving and that they are embedded in buildings, landscapes, and sites.

The 2017 document also argues for several considerations that we have not addressed in this current work. They place significant emphasis on commemorating the stories of positive change agents through new interpretive markers. Their document charges the University to provide dedicated financial resources to support research and classes aimed at fostering greater engagement with the University’s history and historic landscape; developing classwork, programming, and orientation events that engage that history; and introducing visible symbols commemorating change agents. They also argue that the current exhibition in the Lower East Oval Room of the Rotunda is insufficient: “It is incumbent upon the University to make such historical narrative and content more readily available through online archives and potentially through a University museum.” Implicit in this recommendation is the need for a dedicated professional curatorial staff. It is important to note that President Ryan has already taken some action on these recommendations. In 2019, the Barringer wing of the hospital was renamed for Francis Collins, and just a few weeks ago he announced the launch of a broad program of new portraits and interpretive markers that will honor change agents in our history, as well as a new digital tour that will offer a more complete and historically accurate introduction to the University.¹⁴

This document builds on this previous work in two important ways. The previous document argues

the removal or alteration of existing symbols should be based on accepted curatorial principles. For example, does the symbol lack historical importance to the University? Does the symbol continue to have value as an object for teaching, study or research? Does the symbol currently

¹⁴ Caroline Newman, “President Ryan announces additions to UVA’s historic landscape,” *UVA Today*, 1/30/2020. For an overview of racism at predominately white American universities, see Lawrence Ross, *Blackballed: The Black and White Politics of Race on America’s Campuses* (New York, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2016), *passim*.

reflect the values of the University? If the symbol does not fulfill one of these purposes, then alteration should be considered.¹⁵

This more recent process and this resulting document places greater emphasis on the perpetuation of harm that can result from inaction, suggests a finer-grained series of tests to be applied to names and monuments, and offers a practical set of recommendations for institutionalizing a process to sustain this work.

Responding to the recommendations in this document will convert heretofore ad hoc initiatives into a systematic and consistent process to align our memorialization and our mission. A rigorous reconsideration of UVA building names and monuments fulfills both the letter and spirit of President James Ryan’s “great and good” vision for the University.

“As a University, we ought to be dedicated to pursuing the truth, and that should begin at home,” Ryan recently told the inaugural gathering of a new statewide commission examining how African American history is taught in Virginia’s public schools. “It’s important that we understand our path — the good, the bad, and the truly ugly.”¹⁶

Failing to do so, as the Cincinnati report makes clear, is “a betrayal of our university’s core values, is injurious to the university community, [and] constitutes the misrepresentation of history.”¹⁷

II. Building on the Yale (2016) and Cincinnati (2019) Renaming Principles

In 2016, Yale University’s president charged a committee to articulate principles to guide that university in preserving or removing historical names. Just a few months ago, the University of Cincinnati published its own report on the same subject. We have found those two documents particularly helpful in guiding our own discussions. They rightly state that a critical mission of a university is to discover and disseminate knowledge; that history is one of those forms of knowledge; and that a university cannot be involved in the work of erasing history. But they helpfully distinguish between *change* and *erasure* and between *presenting knowledge* and *bestowing honor*.

As the Yale renaming statement cogently explained: “The decision to change a building name is emphatically not a decision to remove a book from a library, change the contents of a syllabus, strike an idea from a course discussion, or rule out a dining hall conversation. In building names and its campus symbols, the University communicates values, confers honor, and expresses gratitude to those who have contributed to its mission. In other words, the University itself speaks through its building names.”

These two statements include some very helpful operational principles that we would like to affirm and restate in our own terms:

- 1) Changing building names, or removing monuments, or recontextualizing either on a campus is not new; it is a natural extension of change over time.
- 2) A university must pursue its mission as its principal responsibility and must consider a response when traditions, practices, or symbols undermine that mission.

¹⁵ <https://response.virginia.edu/system/files/public/historic-committee-report-april-2018.pdf>

¹⁶ https://www.dailyprogress.com/news/local/black-history-education-group-holds-first-meeting-at-uva/article_b91f8cec-eb92-5a20-8939-5b787ef91bb3.html

¹⁷ <https://www.uc.edu/content/dam/uc/president/docs/report-of-the-mcmicken-working-group.pdf>

- 3) Honorific and philanthropic naming of memorial monuments should be reserved for individuals with direct connections to the University.
- 4) All conversations around changes to monuments or memorials or recontextualizing either must be transparent and, in alignment with mission, should be an opportunity for teaching and learning.
- 5) All conversations around potential name changes, monument removal, or recontextualization should include intentional engagement with all possible stakeholders.
- 6) The decision to rename a building, remove a monument, or recontextualize either should depend on a scholarly consensus of that namesake's principal legacy.
- 7) As defined in the Yale document, principal legacies are "typically the lasting effects that cause a namesake to be remembered."
- 8) Any principal legacy should be evaluated by considering three critical moments: the moment of the person's life and work; the moment of the naming decision; and the present.
- 9) Informed by that scholarly consensus and the stakeholder engagement, the University must make a judicious determination that an honoree's principal legacy is at odds with the University's mission in order to warrant change, removal, or recontextualization.
- 10) Upon the decision to change a tradition or monument, remove a name from a building, or recontextualize, the University has the responsibility to document the process and preserve as historical knowledge the assessment of the scholarly consensus and the reason for the change in a durable, longstanding venue to ensure that it is clearly change and not erasure.

III. Developing Reconsideration Criteria for UVA

Our recommendations included below depart from those offered by both Yale and Cincinnati in at least two important ways: We recommend that the criterion to rename, remove, or recontextualize be incorporated into the processes already established for determining an honorific or philanthropic namesake for a new building. Our recommendation is to streamline the process by charging one single committee with the stewardship of UVA's memorialization and mission. The committee would thus be directed to identify and evaluate the principal legacies of individuals they think worthy of honor while simultaneously evaluating the principal legacies of those they think worthy of reconsideration. Secondly, we wish to place a strong emphasis on public education and want to foreground the importance of recontextualization both as truth-telling, but also as fulfilling our mission to educate.

The criteria for assessing a principal legacy worthy of honor should be simple. The person in question should exhibit one or more of the following attributes:

- 1) distinguished service to the University
- 2) nationally recognized contributions to their academic field, community, or nation
- 3) service as a critical change agent for the University

These criteria assume that, now and in the future, the university would ensure that individuals deemed worthy of this recognition would not have legacies associated with racism or other actions or beliefs that delimited civil rights. These concerns are articulated in greater detail at the end of this paper.

The decisions about how to evaluate honorific or philanthropic name changes or recontextualization for existing building names or monuments, however, are more complicated. Based on the 10 operational principles outlined in the previous section, our committee recommends that UVA embrace four tests upon which to ground the decision to change a monument, name, or tradition; recontextualize a building name or monument/statue; or remove a name or monument from public space. If a case fails one of these four tests, then the University must be bound to make the choice of either recontextualization or name change.

1) *Is the person closely associated with the University of Virginia?*

This criterion is self-explanatory.

2) *Was the person's principal legacy contested in the moment of their lifetime?*

The Yale writers ask the question: “Was the relevant principal legacy significantly contested in the time and place in which the namesake lived?” In asking this question, they wish to distinguish between those whose work actively promoted or furthered discriminatory practices from those whose relationship to discrimination was commonplace or unexceptional. The Yale writers seek to remove from the circle of honor those individuals whose beliefs or practices were considered morally suspect and corrupt and controversial in their own day, and whose principal legacies are thus “properly thought of as singularly and distinctively unworthy of honor.” In our assessment, the pervasive realities of white supremacist thinking through the mid-20th Century require a broader frame for this test. Given the historical context in Virginia—UVA’s exceptionally prominent role in promoting the systems of slavery and segregation, and the resolute, pervasive resistance of African Americans to those systems (see the vast modern scholarly literature on the many forms of slave resistance and black political activism)—we deem those namesakes whose principal legacy furthered the South’s prevailing white supremacist ideology not worthy of honor.¹⁸

3) *Was the University's contemporary intent of naming at odds with the mission of the University of Virginia?*

This second moment is equally important because, as the Yale document makes clear, the institution might have wanted to honor a namesake for reasons that are fundamentally at odds with the mission of the University. This test requires a nuanced scholarly analysis of the process by which the institution chose to bestow the honor. Here the test lies not with the person’s life but with the institution’s intentions. This is particularly important because, as we have come increasingly to recognize over the past few years, the decision to name can itself be motivated by intent to harm. Here our previous discussion of UVA’s Lost Cause legacy becomes especially relevant. For example, the decision to bestow honor on someone whose work or life—as understood in the moment of naming—affirmed harmful Lost Cause mythologies would be reason to reconsider that memorializing choice.

4) *Is the person's principal legacy currently at odds with the mission of the University of Virginia?*

If the namesake’s principal legacy was the perpetuation of harm to minorities, women, or people of color, that legacy clearly fails the test of agreeing with the University’s mission, even if the person was not singled

¹⁸ See Gerald W. Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-Century Virginia*, Oxford University Press, 1972; Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*, Pantheon, 1974; James Sidbury, *Ploughshares Into Swords: Race, Rebellion, and Identity in Gabriel's Virginia 1730-1810*, Cambridge University Press, 1997; John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation*, Oxford University Press 1999; Stephanie M. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South*, UNC Press, 2004; Michael Craton, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies*, Cornell University Press, 2009; Alan Taylor, *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and Virginia in Virginia, 1772-1832*, Norton, 2013.

out for condemnation in their own day, and even if the University's intent in naming was not clearly motivated by an intent of harm.

A Word about Recent Changes

Principle 10 above, emphasizing the need to document our evaluation process, is especially relevant in our current moment. Our commitments to truth-telling, affirming a diverse and inclusive community, and rigorous public history mean that we must be able to face uncomfortable histories with clear-eyed courage. That UVA has been shaped by Lost Cause mythologies and that our Grounds embody white supremacist histories are simple historical facts. Denying them undermines our own intellectual integrity and perpetuates the harm to our students, staff, and faculty of color. Minimizing these histories and their legacies, or opting only for very incremental and quiet changes, perpetuates the injustices wrought by white supremacy. If we wish to cultivate the most vibrant community in higher education, we must expose and acknowledge our long history of oppression and leave evidence of that history as a transparent reminder of the devastating legacy of privilege.

Barringer Wing, Lewis Dormitory, and Jordan Hall: In each of these instances of buildings named for eugenicists, the University has already taken action to change these names. The central thrust of their research—their principal legacy—was the diminution of the humanity and dignity of people of color. Yet we are not convinced that the University has yet done enough on Principle 10. When the University makes the decision to change a name on moral grounds, it cannot be done quietly. The University must engage in a careful scholarly assessment of the person's legacy and undertake an open and transparent conversation as a community. In this way we make the choice to change and not erase, and to enlist this decision as a teaching and learning opportunity in concert with our mission. Thus, we recommend that further contextualization should be considered for these buildings so that current and future generations can learn from the original decision to honor these namesakes and the more recent decisions to remove their names.

IV. Existing Naming Policy and Procedures at UVA

The University already has an existing framework for addressing building names and monuments, [EXT-004: Naming Policies for the University of Virginia](#), which offers a solid foundation for the work that needs to be done. The policy contains a provision for the University's president to appoint a Committee on Names that makes recommendations to the president and Board of Visitors. That policy reads in part:

Principles on Naming and Re-Naming:

We believe that the principles guiding the naming and renaming of University spaces should reflect our values as an academic institution. These principles are designed to provide a framework/reference point/lens used by the relevant authorities when making naming/re-naming decisions. In fulfillment of these principles and in seeking to avoid improper influence and conflict of interest, the University is committed to due diligence in the implementation of its naming policies and procedures.

- a. **Pedagogy:** As an academic institution we use names and naming as a tool to build a living history. Names serve as a projection of our values: names reflect our traditions (where we have been) and our aspirations (where we are headed). An essential component of the (re)naming process is due diligence: it is the responsibility of the University to engage in serious and substantial scholarly research when considering a naming opportunity. That research should address the contribution and legacy of individuals, business entities,

foundations, and other organizations after whom University entities have been or might be named; the meanings that existing names have accrued over time, in context, across the University community; and the ways such names can contribute to building traditions and community at the University. The principle of pedagogy requires that the research compiled is part of the public record so that future generations understand the importance of the (re)naming, the procedure that went into the (re)naming decision, and the social, political, and historical context that surround the (re)naming.

b. **Commitment:** Naming connotes the establishment of a tradition. The University expends time and energy in making a naming decision. Those wishing to name or rename a new or existing space accept the burden of due diligence in justifying such decisions: they must demonstrate that a proposed name is consistent with the pedagogical purposes and community values of the University. Once a building, space, or academic unit has been named, there is an assumption that the name shall not be changed before the end of the naming term, unless there are exceptional circumstances or compelling reasons for such a change. That rationale must be documented appropriately.

The University's naming policy also prescribes that "philanthropic namings" of buildings shall remain in place for at least 75 years, while "honorific namings" of buildings shall endure for at least 25 years.

V. Recommendations to President Ryan

To build upon what have been, up to now, isolated and spontaneous renaming initiatives at UVA, the President's Commission on the University in the Age of Segregation proposes that **the University should embark on a comprehensive and systematic evaluation of all problematic building names, monuments, and memorials across Grounds**, subjecting them to a detailed review leading to potential renaming, recontextualization, or removal. This process will take many years and should unfold in a careful, systematic, and transparent manner. The Commission further proposes that **the University should pledge not to raise future memorials or support commemorations for individuals or organizations who represent racist or discriminatory ideologies**. We recommend that this happen through a reconstitution of the existing Committee on Names, which, informed by rigorous scholarly assessments, would seize new honorific naming opportunities and undertake when necessary the removal or recontextualization of honorific or philanthropic names and monuments that clearly fail the tests as outlined above.

We recommend that President Ryan take three specific steps and then offer the following guiding direction:

- 1) **Reconstitute the University's Committee on Names as the "Committee on Memorialization and Mission."** The Committee is chaired currently by the vice president for advancement and is comprised of 10 individuals appointed by virtue of their office or position, with six at-large faculty, staff, and students. Recognizing that there are certain administrators who likely need to remain on this committee, we recommend that the president reconstitute this committee to reflect more evenly the whole University community by ensuring a greater number of faculty, students, and staff over appointed administrators. The committee should reflect racial, ethnic, and gender diversity and especially include student and staff representatives from historically marginalized communities. We recommend that this committee be chaired by the president or the provost, or by a faculty member with expertise in history or historical studies appointed by the president.

2) **Deliver a new charge to the Committee on Memorialization and Mission.** This committee should be responsible for all memorialization practices across Grounds, inclusive of proposing new names for buildings intended to bear honorific and philanthropic names, but also to oversee the process of evaluating existing but potentially inappropriate names or monuments and making a recommendation to the president for any name changes, monument removal, or recontextualization. In so doing, the committee members are also charged to ensure that UVA's practice of honorific or philanthropic memorialization is aligned with our mission and our commitment to being a community of trust and honor. In order to accomplish this, the committee would need to do the following:

- Maintain a list of UVA affiliates and change agents whose lives are worthy of honorific recognition. Reprioritize this list annually based on new and updated information.
- Maintain a list of all honorific- and philanthropic-named buildings and places across Grounds to include the expiration date of their naming term of either 25 or 75 years. Maintain a list of all honorific monuments or statues.
- Maintain a list of all currently named buildings or monuments whose namesake rightly deserves reconsideration. Given the potentially large number of building names and monuments to be evaluated and the burden of serious scholarly analysis that will be required, the committee is charged to determine a prioritized list to result in no more than three reviews per academic year in order to establish a steady pace for this work. Reprioritize this list annually based on new and updated information.
- Charge the standing panel of experts (see below) to produce scholarly reports on any namesake under consideration for establishment, removal, or recontextualization.
- Engage all potential stakeholders in an open and transparent manner (paying specific attention to underrepresented communities)
- Establish and maintain a public website that serves as a repository of all scholarly reports and documents and the processes of engagement and deliberation in each instance.
- Require that whenever the Committee on Memorialization and Mission determines that a particular building, monument, or memorial bears an honorific or philanthropic name that fails at least one of the Tests 1, 2, 3, or 4 (enumerated above) that building, monument, or location must at least be recontextualized in a prominent and public way. In so doing, the University affirms its commitment to change but not erasure. This can take the form of, for example, an archival collection in the library system, a website with the requisite documentation, or informational placards or brochures.
- Make recommendations to the president of the University for the establishment of new namesakes and the removal of others based on the criteria outlined above. In the latter instance, the recommendation must include an estimate of the costs involved, inclusive of the financial costs in making the change and the psychic and moral costs of inaction. The president will then make a recommendation to the Board of Visitors.
- Make recommendations to the president of the University for the establishment of

recontextualization and accurate historical interpretation. In the instance that the Committee on Memorialization and Mission has reviewed a case and sees the opportunity for reinterpretation or recontextualization as a means of fulfilling our educational mission, then they should recommend an installation that allows for a public and highly visible consideration of the legacy in question. The content for that recontextualization should be drawn directly from the scholarly report generated by the panel of experts.

- It is important to recognize that recontextualization must itself be context-responsive. For example, were it to be determined that the University needed to recontextualize Alderman Library, then the design and installation of an exhibition on Edwin Alderman's life and complicated legacy would be a welcome addition to the newly renovated library's Memorial Hall. Such a space that welcomes lingering and reflection would be appropriate to an exhibition. Conversely, recontextualizing the George Rogers Clark Monument would be an enormous undertaking given the scale and visual power of the original monument and its situation adjacent to a roadway.

3) **Appoint a standing committee or panel of scholarly experts.** Recognizing that the Committee on Memorialization and Mission will likely include few members with expertise in history and that they will need to function as their own independent decision-making body, we recommend that the president establish a standing panel of three experts in history who will agree to produce the reports examining the principal legacy of any namesake considered for establishment, removal, or recontextualization. This panel of three will inevitably need to rely on additional expertise, but we believe that the consistency of a standing panel is important. For this panel, the president should enlist experts in the realms of collective memory and commemoration and from disciplines including history, sociology, anthropology, African American studies, American studies, and architectural history.

We recommend that the president offer to the Committee on Memorialization and Mission the following additional direction:

- 1) Revise the language in Section (b) of the above-quoted Naming Policy: "Once a building, space, or academic unit has been named, there is an assumption that the name shall not be changed before the end of the naming term, unless there are exceptional circumstances or compelling reasons for such a change." We assume most of those individuals whose principal legacy fostered white supremacy will already have surpassed their 25- or 75-year terms and that these names will be among the very first to be reconsidered in any event. In the instance, however, that one of these honorific or philanthropic names has not surpassed that term, the burden of proof should be reversed: The burden will be on the argument for preservation, not removal.
- 2) In the instance that a particular consideration affects a population not well represented by the committee (here Native Americans come quickly to mind) the Committee bears a particular responsibility for seeking the perspectives and advice of those communities directly impacted by that namesake's legacy before making any formal recommendation.
- 3) Conduct the committee's proceedings in public and solicit public input throughout the research and review process.

- 4) For cases that are widely contested or inconclusive, consider establishing a "sitting period" of one year during which contextual signage is placed in and around the building or monument, followed by public debate and a potential renaming/removal/recontextualization decision.
- 5) Adopt new requirements for naming buildings or raising monuments in the future, using this suggested framework:

Henceforth, the University of Virginia and its entities within and outside of Charlottesville, Virginia, and the Commonwealth of Virginia, pledge not to raise memorials or support commemorations:

- 1) for events/persons/organizations whose policies/activities seek or sought the loss of freedom or civil rights/liberties of any class or group of Virginia and American citizens in violation of provisions of the U. S. Constitution and state and federal laws;
- 2) of individuals/organizations, alive or deceased, who represented racist ideas or ideologies and supported their defense with racial-gender discrimination, violence, domestic terrorism, and similar threats;
- 3) of persons/organizations convicted of violating local, state, national and international statutes and treaties and generally accepted standards of human dignity, equal rights, and civil liberties;
- 4) However, nothing in these provisions shall be deemed as requiring the immediate arbitrary removal/renaming/razing of University buildings, events, monuments, memorials, endowments, scholarships and similar affiliations without public debate and public approval by the Board of Visitors and based on written and publicly available recommendations/policies submitted by duly appointed or designated committees/commissions and similar University ad-hoc or permanent representative groups as appointed under the authority of the Board of Visitors, the president, provosts, deans, and department heads.