

## Gettysburg College

### **Policy for Renaming Principles and Process**

#### **Renaming Principles**

The College Board of Trustees has adopted the following principles when deciding whether to rename a campus building, structure, space, program or scholarship/fellowship:

1. Renaming is an exceptional event and the decision should be made only after careful and deliberate consideration. There is a strong presumption against renaming, and in evaluating the information available, substantial weight shall be given in favor of continuity. The presumption against renaming is at its strongest when a building or program has been named for someone who has made major contributions to the College

2. Renaming should be strongly considered where the actions or words of a namesake directly conflict with the College's mission statement and the core values of the institution. In reviewing the matter, the actions or words should not be taken in isolation. They must be evaluated as part of a holistic approach that considers the historical context of the conduct and the individual's larger patterns of behavior and personal values.

3. Renaming decisions come with the obligation to communicate properly historical information. On the one hand, when a name is altered, there are obligations on the College to ensure the removal does not have the effect of erasing history. On the other hand, when a name is retained, there may be obligations on the College to ensure preservation does not have the effect of distorting history.

For clarity, naming (as opposed to renaming) a campus building, structure, space program, or scholarship/fellowship is covered by other College policies, not these Principles.

#### **Renaming Process**

1. Concern Received.
  - a. Concerns related to the existing name of a campus building, structure, space, program, or scholarship/fellowship ("Concern") should be submitted to the College's President. If staff, faculty or Trustees receive a Concern, that Concern should be promptly forwarded to the President (which, upon request of a student, may be done in a manner that preserves the identity of the student). The Concern will first be reviewed by the College's President or his/her designee ("College Officer"). Concerns may be also submitted anonymously by any member of the College community.
  - b. If the College Officer determines that the Concern is credible and has been raised in good faith, then the College Officer shall refer the Concern to the Chair of the Board of Trustees' Executive Committee ("EC") and shall inform the Chair of the Board, and the Chair of the Audit Compliance and Risk

Committee. The Chair of the Audit, Compliance and Risk Committee shall consider whether the Concern poses a risk that should be addressed in whole or in part by that Committee in accordance with its charter.

- c. If the College Officer determines that the Concern is not credible, is not raised in good faith or is not covered by this Policy, that conclusion shall be communicated to the person or organization who raised the Concern, if not anonymous, and to the broader College community to the extent it is aware of the Concern

## 2. Renaming Committee Formation.

- a. The EC Chair shall appoint an ad hoc Renaming Committee to investigate and make a recommendation to the EC regarding the disposition of the Concern. The investigation should be done as expeditiously as possible taking into consideration the College calendar.
- b. The voting members of the Renaming Committee shall be at least one, but typically not more than three, College Trustees. The EC Chair may also appoint non-Trustees as non-voting members to the Renaming Committee based on the specific nature of the Concern and required expertise.

## 3. Renaming Committee Investigation and Recommendation.

- a. The Renaming Committee shall investigate, either by itself, or by delegating the investigation to an individual (who need not be a member of the Renaming Committee), all the factual and historical circumstances relevant to the Concern. The scope of the investigation must be flexible but must also work to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that the gathering of all available factual and historical information is done objectively. The Renaming Committee shall consider the conduct at issue based on the standards of the namesake's time and place, not through a contemporary lens.
- b. The Renaming Committee shall consider the degree to which, or whether, it is appropriate, to seek input from (i) the broader College community, including input from students, faculty, staff, and/or alumni, and should include a review of relevant social media, and/or (ii) the College historian, archivist and development staff for any relevant naming information.
- c. The Renaming Committee shall obtain input directly from the individuals and groups potentially most affected by the Concern and should consider meeting in that individual's or group's space when feasible. Those affected include individuals and groups connected with raising the Concern, and those individuals and groups who would be affected if a renaming were to occur, including the namesake or his/her descendants or representatives if the namesake is deceased or otherwise unavailable.
- d. The Renaming Committee shall then apply the Renaming Principles to the information gathered from the community input and the factual and historical

examination to develop its recommendations as to how the College should respond to the Concern.

- e. The Renaming Committee shall transmit its findings and recommendations to the EC.

4. Executive Committee Action/Board of Trustees.

- a. The EC shall consider the recommendations of the Renaming Committee and shall then make its own recommendations to the Board of Trustees. The EC may affirm, reject, or modify the recommendation of the Renaming Committee.
- b. The Board of Trustees shall consider the recommendations of the EC and take action with respect to the Concern. The action of the Board shall be the final action of the College.
- c. To encourage forthright, robust discussion during the process, the written reports of the Renaming Committee and the EC shall be treated as draft, confidential investigative materials.

5. Communicating the Decision.

- a. The College Officer will communicate the Board's action to the individual or organization that raised the Concern and to the broader College community. The communications will include a summary of the facts, the decision, the "why" of the decision, and a description of the way forward.
- b. Upon a renaming decision being made, caution must be taken to identify all named items on campus.
- c. If the lessons learned from the renaming contains an educational opportunity, the College will engage in that dialogue with the community.