

# **Procedure for Reviewing Names of University Spaces, Units and Entities**

## **(4/20/22)**

### **Introduction**

Cleveland State University (CSU) is committed to creating and discovering knowledge to improve the wellbeing of our state, regional, national and global communities; educating students through a comprehensive array of distinguished academic programs; preparing a diverse student body to be leaders and engaged citizens; and fostering a culture of engagement and service.

To live up to these ideals, the university must be willing to regularly examine its practices and standards, to ensure alignment with its values. This commitment to reflection extends to all aspects of the institution, including the names associated with university spaces, units and entities.

To provide clarity on the process for reviewing such names, the university has created the procedure set forth below for CSU students, faculty, staff, alumni and/or community members to submit requests for the review of university space, unit or entity names. In following these procedures, the university will be guided by the following broad principles:

- Changing named spaces, units or entities is a consequential decision that requires careful study and thoughtful consideration of different viewpoints.
- In considering a name change, the university should conduct a thoughtful and inclusive process, informed by careful historical research and reflection.
- This process should be guided both by the distinguished history and the present values and mission of CSU.
- Decisions about naming and renaming must be made with due regard for CSU's educational mission and core values, including its commitments to teaching, quality research, truth-seeking, and inclusivity.

### **Relevant Policy**

In the policy on Space, Unit and Entity Naming, CSU names entities and spaces in three different categories –philanthropic naming, honorific naming, and administrative naming. That policy is designed to help foster positive recognition of individuals and organizations while also protecting the university's integrity and reputation. The university will agree to name a space, unit or entity only after a deliberate consideration of relevant factors, including the potential impact of the naming on the institution and community stakeholders, as well as its alignment with university mission, traditions, and policies. Once a name is established, the university is committed to retaining the name of a space, unit or entity for its useful life or as otherwise provided for in a gift agreement or Board of Trustees resolution. However, the policy allows the

university to remove a name, upon approval from the President and Board of Trustees. The procedure set forth below provides additional guidance for such decisions.

## **Procedure Overview**

Removing a naming designation is a serious step that must not be taken lightly or hastily. To address requests for such changes, an ad hoc committee consisting of university representatives will be convened to review requests to remove existing names according to established criteria and make recommendations regarding appropriate actions to the Provost and President. Final decisions regarding the removal or amendment of existing names rest with the Board of Trustees. The procedure entails four phases:

1. Request and Initial Review
- 2.. Review by Ad Hoc Advisory Committee
3. President's Review of Final Committee Recommendations
4. Decision and Resolution by Board of Trustees

## **Procedure for Reviewing Names of University Spaces and Entities**

### *Phase I: Request and Initial Review*

- *Submitting requests.* Any member of the CSU community - specifically faculty, staff, students or alumni - may submit a request for the renaming of a university entity or space by completing a form that will be available online. The form and all related documentation will be submitted to the Provost's Office, where it will be reviewed to determine if sufficient information has been provided. The Provost may request additional information if required. A decision on whether or not to advance the request to the review phase will be made within 14 working days.
- *Request criteria.* Those who wish to change the formally designated names of spaces, units or entities at CSU must make a compelling case for the name removal or amendment by providing substantial evidence of misconduct or other inappropriate behavior by the individual or entity at issue, and demonstrate that this conduct or behavior is harmful to CSU's reputation for excellence and its values of integrity and inclusiveness. Individuals submitting such a request will be responsible for thoroughly documenting the sources used to support their request and explaining why those sources are credible and reliable.
  - Requestors will be required to share the following:
    - Name and affiliation with CSU, including contact information.
    - The space/entity/unit name requested to be reviewed for removal.

- Why was the building named after this person? Was the name honorific or in recognition of a philanthropic gift (if known)? If it was honorific, briefly describe the honoree's significant contributions to CSU.
  - Why is the legacy of the namesake fundamentally at odds with the principles guiding the campus today? That is, explain why the legacy's pernicious effects outweigh the individual's contributions. What substantial evidence is there to support this claim?
  - What is the perceived impact on members of the university or local community if the name is retained? What is the impact if it is removed?
  - Any other relevant information or arguments that should be considered by the ad hoc review and advisory committee.
- *Ad Hoc Review and Advisory Committee.* When a naming review request is received, an ad hoc review and advisory committee will be convened by the Provost. The committee will include faculty, staff, students and representatives from key areas, including but not limited to Academic Affairs, Advancement, Alumni Association, Diversity and Inclusion, General Counsel, University Libraries and Archives, elected members of the Faculty Senate, undergraduate and graduate student associations.

## *Phase II: Review and Recommendation by Ad Hoc Review and Advisory Committee*

### Investigation

Once convened, the ad hoc review and advisory committee may consult with and receive assistance from the University Libraries and Archives to fully review the request and related documentation, and determine whether to recommend removal of the name at issue. The committee may choose to rely primarily on the materials provided by the requester if they deem this information sufficient to render a recommendation. In performing this review, the committee should fully consider all relevant facts surrounding the name and evaluate how those facts impact the decision as to whether to make a change. The committee shall have the authority to speak with other individuals and request additional information as they deem appropriate to conduct their review. At all times the committee will consider the guiding principles underlying these procedures (as outlined above).

Requests for removing a name will be more compelling if supported by substantial evidence that:

- Following the naming recognition, the namesake was found to have committed a serious violation of a state or U.S. law during that individual's lifetime.
- The serious misconduct in question was central to the namesake's career, public persona or life as a whole.
- Allegations of behavior in question are supported by documentary evidence that demonstrates both the extent and the intentionality of the namesake's actions.
- Honoring the 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 public.

By contrast, requests for removing a name will be considered weaker when there is not substantial evidence of the above factors, or where:

- The namesake's offensive behavior or viewpoints were in accordance with societal norms 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 a significant level of evolution or moderation of the namesake's behavior and/or views toward greater inclusion, service or reparations for prior injustices.

### Committee Recommendation

Within 90 days of convening, the committee shall make a recommendation regarding the request, although the committee may request an extension, which may be granted by the Provost. To recommend a removal, the committee must find substantial evidence that the individual or entity's name is fundamentally at odds with and harmful to the university's reputation for excellence and its values of integrity and inclusiveness. In making this determination, the committee must consider whether the name:

- Creates or reinforces stereotypes of individuals or groups based on race, gender, ethnicity and other identities considered protected under law;
- Promotes professional practices, policies and scholarship that have now been debunked as fraudulent or unethical;
- Supports action or inaction that perpetuates inequity either in the namesake's own era or in the current time; and/or
- Has a significant and demonstrably harmful impact on the university's reputation in another way.

If one or more of the above factors are met, the committee may recommend that the name be removed. However, the committee may also recommend that, based on the nuanced history surrounding this issue, the concerns be addressed through alternative means that either add to or provide a substitute for commemoration rather than full removal of the name. These alternative actions may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Installing new/revised information on plaques or other memorial items to provide a fuller account of the actions and legacies of the honoree.
- Installing new plaques, statuary, or other memorial items alongside the existing named object/edifice to honor individuals who better represent our commitment to diversity and inclusion.

- Expanding (and, where necessary, correcting) the historical narrative on campus websites, plaques and other markers.
- Creating a permanent exhibit on campus that gives fuller account of an honoree's actions and legacies and encourages open and contextualized discussions.

Ultimately, the committee will provide a written report, including a recommendation whether removal of the name in question is appropriate, whether some other action to address concerns should be taken, or whether no change should be made, to the Provost and the President. The committee shall also deliver a copy of the written report to the requestor(s), who shall have ten (10) business days from the date of mailing to provide any written response that they deem appropriate to the Provost and the President.

### *Phase III: President's Review of Final Committee Recommendations*

The President shall review the ad hoc committee's final recommendation and shall have the authority to either accept, reject, or modify the committee's recommendation. In making this decision, the President shall consider the nature of the allegations, the evidence in support of the request, and the potential impact on the university based on the information presented. In performing this review, the President may consult with other individuals as the President deems appropriate.

If the President decides to recommend removing or otherwise modifying the name at issue, the matter shall be advanced to the Board of Trustees for final review and action. The Office of the President will communicate the President's decision in writing to the requestor(s) with a copy to the Board, within 30 days of receiving the recommendation from the committee.

### *Phase IV: Review by Board of Trustees*

Upon receiving a recommendation from the President for the removal or amendment of a name, the Board of Trustees' Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee will evaluate the committee's report and the President's recommendation, along with any other relevant materials, and shall make a final decision as to whether such action is appropriate, and may approve, deny or modify any action recommended by the President. If the Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee decides that the recommendation to remove or amend a name is appropriate, it will then be advanced to the full Board of Trustees for final approval. Importantly, if the Board decides to remove or amend a name, any new name being considered shall be addressed in accordance with separate university processes. Removal does not indicate an agreement to implement a new name suggested by the requestor(s) or some other party.

Decisions made by the Board of Trustees are final. However, a subsequent review of the name of the same entity or space may be initiated if new material information comes to light following the Board's decision. The Office of the President shall inform the requestor(s) in writing of the

Board of Trustees' decision. Further, for all naming matters that reach the Board of Trustees, the committee's report, President's decision, and Board of Trustees action shall be maintained in the CSU Archives.