

TO: President Maurie McInnis

FROM: Judi Brown Clarke, VP for Equity & Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer

RE: Recommendation from Ad Hoc Committee on Renaming

On July 21, 2020, you sent a communication to the campus community announcing the formation of a cross-stakeholder committee that will “...help develop principles that can guide our future process for renaming any building, space, or structure on our campus.”¹ An ad hoc committee (“Committee”) was assembled in the fall of 2020 and worked with me to craft recommendations for principles and procedures to guide the University in considering future renaming requests.

The Committee took a purposeful and introspective look at Stony Brook University’s character, structure, and history. Members discussed and reviewed archival SBU materials, prior efforts to examine SBU building names, SUNY policies and university practices, efforts at other institutions to examine building and place names, principles of historical inquiry, and proposed outcomes for a renaming request evaluation process. Additionally, discussions focused on options for membership, process, and strategies to ensure transparency, public input, and a dissemination of findings.

The Committee’s scope did not include the power to recommend that any particular feature’s name be changed. This limitation on authority allowed for the freedom to deliberate on the creation of principles and procedures versus any controversies around a particular feature at Stony Brook. As a result, Committee members developed a fair and rationale process that is mindful of fundamental key principles, calls for consistent, evidence-based and thoughtful actions when evaluating historical naming and honors, and should be able to stand the test of time.

The Committee recommends that its work be adopted and communicated to the campus community by the end of the spring 2021 semester and that a Standing Committee be appointed by the start of each semester to be convened if there are renaming requests or that an ad hoc committee be convened should any renaming requests be submitted. The Committee also recommends that a web presence be developed that highlights relevant resources regarding the naming of features on campus, the renaming request process and findings and other information related to the naming of buildings generally and at Stony Brook University.

¹ See: https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/pres/from_president/message_072120.php