

**Recommendations to the Architectural Naming Committee
for a Renaming Request Evaluation Process**

**Buildings and Place Names Advisory Committee
Oregon State University**

March 13, 2017

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I. Introduction

Buildings and places play an important role in how we – OSU community members – interact with our university. Buildings and places contain spaces for education and inquiry and are symbolic of the knowledge, understanding, and comprehension we seek.

At Oregon State, community members have raised legitimate concerns regarding several university buildings whose namesakes may have held or espoused racist or otherwise exclusionary views. These community members pose an important question: “What does it mean for OSU to value equity and inclusion if individuals after whom its buildings are named did not?”

As OSU community members, we are asked to engage with uncomfortable, difficult and sometimes offensive ideas to grow through critical thinking. In fact, a central role of the university is to protect the right to academic freedom and free speech. But the university plays a different role when it names a building or place. On occasion, the university expresses gratitude to individuals who advance the university’s mission and values by placing their name on a building or place. In essence, when OSU places a name on a building, it speaks to its values and mission. One of the values at Oregon State is the importance of inclusion and equity – our mission is to create an environment that respects and affirms the inherent dignity, value and uniqueness of all individuals and communities. When we are asked to consider renaming a building, we do so keeping this important role of the university in mind.

When these concerns were raised, the university, through its Architectural Naming Committee, committed to creating a process by which requests to rename buildings could be evaluated and acted upon. In doing so, the OSU community is asked to think deeply about the purpose of building and place names, the individuals after whom they are named, and our responsibility to grapple with legacies that may be inconsistent with OSU’s present mission and values. The Building and Place Names Advisory Committee (the “Committee”) was charged with envisioning, designing and recommending a process for evaluating requests to rename university buildings and places. This memorandum discusses the context for the Committee’s work, the Committee’s recommendations for a renaming request evaluation process and, suggestions for next steps.

Finally, it is important to situate this work within a larger national conversation. Colleges and universities throughout the country are being asked to confront and reconcile their connections to exclusionary parts of history. Oregon State joins the University of Michigan, Yale University, University of Virginia, the University of Oregon and many other institutions in this important endeavor. We embrace this task as we seek to create a community animated by accountability, integrity and respect.

II. Background

a. **Building and Place Names Advisory Committee**

In April 2016, Steve Clark, Vice President of University Relations and Marketing, and Chair of the University Architectural Naming Committee, and Angela Batista, Interim Chief Diversity Officer, charged the Building and Place Names Advisory Committee to make recommendations to the Architectural Naming Committee proposing a process for evaluating the names of university buildings and place names.

The Committee's charge grew out of community concerns regarding the names of several buildings on OSU's Corvallis campus, namely Arnold Dining Center, Avery Lodge, Benton Hall and Gill Coliseum. There is evidence to suggest that the namesakes of these buildings may have held or espoused racist or exclusionary views. Some community members have asked that the university to rename these buildings or otherwise address the legacy of their namesakes.

Given these concerns, the Committee was charged with developing a renaming request evaluation process to consider how the university responds when the viewpoints or actions of a building or place namesake do not align with OSU's mission and values. The creation of this process is animated by a commitment to creating an educational environment dedicated to equity, inclusion and social justice, but also inquiry, edification and engagement – cornerstones of OSU's values and mission.¹

Importantly, the Committee was not charged with making a final determination regarding the names of these specific buildings, but rather, to envision a process by which the names of all university buildings and places can be evaluated. Creating a consistent process allows the university to engage in an ongoing conversation with community members regarding the names of current and future university building and place names.

b. **Current renaming policy**

As part of its work, the Committee considered current processes for examining the names of buildings and places. It determined that the university does not have a consistent policy for evaluating a request to rename a building or place.

The current University Property Naming Policy provides for the "modification or relocation of property and names" when "it is in the best interest of the University to relocate, modify, or reallocate named university property."² The policy does not, however, contemplate a process to evaluate the name of a building where a namesake held or holds views, or took actions, inconsistent with the university's values and mission. The committee did note that because the current policy contemplates the evaluation of names where in the "best interest of the

¹ Oregon State University's "Core Values" are set forth as part of the university's Strategic Plan, available at <http://leadership.oregonstate.edu/strategicplan>. The Office of Institutional Diversity has articulated principles regarding the institutional advancement of diversity, equity and inclusion, available at <http://leadership.oregonstate.edu/diversity/diversity-oregon-state/vision-and-principles>.

² University Property Naming Policy, sec. D, available at <http://fa.oregonstate.edu/gen-manual/university-property-naming-policy>.

University,” a renaming request evaluation process dovetails with current policy.

c. Envisioning a renaming request evaluation process

The Committee met over the course of ten months to discuss and envision a recommended renaming request evaluation process. Among other key topics, meetings of the Committee included discussion and review of archival OSU materials, prior efforts to examine OSU building names, efforts at other institutions to examine building and place names, principles of historical inquiry and proposed outcomes for the renaming request evaluation process.

Over the course of these meetings, a set of themes emerged to guide the Committee’s recommendations:

1. The names of university buildings and places play an important role in how we – as OSU students, faculty, staff and community members – see ourselves belonging or not belonging to the university community.
2. Given their prominence and public nature, the names of buildings and places play an important role in demonstrating and advancing the university’s values and its commitment to creating an equitable, inclusive and diverse educational environment.
3. OSU and society have changed over time, in terms of values, demographics and an awareness of structural injustice. A process to evaluate the appropriateness of names of university buildings and places provides a means to critically reflect on our past and present. It provides an opportunity for the university to respond to societal and institutional change in a thoughtful, constructive and restorative way.
4. A process must consider the complex and multi-faceted nature of a namesake’s viewpoints and actions. Individuals form viewpoints and take actions under unique socio-cultural circumstances.
5. A process must also consider the relationship between an individual’s viewpoints and actions and values of society and institution of the time. This means that a namesake whose viewpoints or actions may have been acceptable in the past, may now be unacceptable in the present. Therefore, a process must consider how an individual’s viewpoints, actions and values align, or misalign, with contemporary societal values and OSU’s contemporary values and mission.
6. Community education and engagement must be primary goals of a process. As a result, renaming a building or place may not be appropriate in all cases, but in all cases communication with the community and engagement and education regarding the outcome of a renaming request evaluation is essential and necessary.
7. Community education and engagement should be both permanent (as in the case of plaques or educational signage) and ongoing (as in educational presentations and discussions).
8. A process must be consistently applied, regardless of building or place name.
9. A process must be transparent to community members.

With these themes in mind, the committee envisioned and designed a renaming request evaluation process to be responsive to the OSU community’s concerns, while also acknowledging and addressing the complexity of history and society.

III. Renaming Request Evaluation Process Recommendation

The Committee recommends the Architectural Naming Committee adopt the following three-step process for the evaluation of requests to rename a university building or place:

a. Step 1. Submission of renaming request

The Architectural Naming Committee (“ANC”) should create and maintain a “building and place renaming request” form on prominent university websites such as the University Relations and Marketing site, and the Office of Institutional Diversity site.

Any community member may submit a renaming request. A request should contain the following information:

- The requestor’s contact information;
- A narrative explaining the basis for the renaming request;
- Citation to references; and
- Attachments to support the renaming evaluation.

The hosting website should provide instructions on how to complete the form and resources to access archival information that may be used to support a renaming request. The university library is prepared to respond to requests for information of this nature and an online guide to resources regarding OSU building and place names is available.³

A sample renaming request, containing a fictional building and examples of supporting attachments, may be provided to guide prospective requestors. The narrative and citations to reference need not conform to any specific academic style, provided that the ANC has sufficient information to guide its review.

Once a renaming request is submitted, the ANC should provide an acknowledgment, an explanation of the process and a timeline for preliminary consideration of the request.

Under certain circumstances, particularly when community concern regarding the names of buildings and places is well-known, the ANC may initiate its own renaming request evaluation process.

b. Step 2. Preliminary evaluation of renaming request by ANC subcommittee

The ANC should form a subcommittee to conduct a preliminary evaluation of renaming requests to determine whether full evaluation by the ANC is appropriate. The Committee recommends that this subcommittee include representatives from at least the following areas: the Special Collections and Archives Research Center, the School of History, Philosophy and Religion and the Office of Institutional Diversity.

The purpose of the preliminary review stage is to ensure that the renaming requests are supported by sufficient documentation to permit a full and fair review of the request. It is not

³ The Special Collections & Archives Research Center online resource guide on OSU building and place names is available at <http://guides.library.oregonstate.edu/osu-buildings-history>.

intended to create an insurmountable barrier to full consideration of the renaming request. Where appropriate, the subcommittee should contact the requestor to pose clarifying questions, correct obvious deficiencies, or request additional or alternative sources of documentation prior to completing its review.

The subcommittee should evaluate renaming requests based on the following criteria:

Does sufficient support exist to demonstrate that the actions or viewpoints of the individual for whom a building or place is named may be inconsistent with OSU's mission to create an equitable, inclusive and diverse educational environment?

"Sufficient documentation" consists of written, oral, visual or first-person accounts substantiating the basis of the request. Sufficiency should be determined on a case-by-case basis by the subcommittee.

Under ideal circumstances, the subcommittee should complete its review within 21 calendar days. If this deadline is not feasible, the subcommittee should communicate its timeline to the requestor.

If a renaming request meets the preliminary evaluation criteria:

- Outcome: The subcommittee will produce a written report documenting its evaluation and recommendation that the full ANC consider the renaming request. The subcommittee will forward its recommendation to the ANC for a full evaluation of the request.
- Process: The written report will be provided to the requestor and posted on the renaming request website.

If a renaming request does not meet the preliminary evaluation criteria:

- Outcome: The subcommittee will communicate in writing its decision to not recommend full evaluation of the renaming request to the requestor. Where appropriate, the subcommittee will communicate its feedback regarding the request to inform a potential resubmission.
- Process: Requests not resulting in a recommendation to evaluate will be stored and maintained by the Architectural Naming Committee for review upon request.

c. Step 3. Full evaluation of renaming request by ANC

When the ANC receives a recommendation from the preliminary evaluation subcommittee, it will engage in a full evaluation of the renaming request. The evaluation should include engagement with content area experts, interested parties, and input gathered through community education and engagement.

Community education and engagement should be structured to educate community members about the context of the namesake's life, seek to generate discussion, and aim to collect constructive input. This input should be incorporated into the ANC's evaluation of a renaming request throughout the process. Practically, this community education and engagement could take the form of a forum, town hall, round table, teach-in, panel presentation, exhibit, or other format conducive to critical engagement. Community education and engagement is central to

the evaluation process.

Following the evaluation process, the full ANC should vote on whether to recommend to the President that a building or place be renamed.

Whether or not the full ANC recommends at this stage that a building or place be renamed, it should recommend permanent community education to provide information regarding the namesake's life and legacy and why the building bears their name.

Under ideal circumstances, the subcommittee should complete its review within 30 days. If this deadline is not feasible, the subcommittee should communicate its timeline to the requestor.

The full ANC should evaluate renaming requests based on the following criteria: Was the "context" of an individual's life and legacy inconsistent with OSU's contemporary mission and values such that a building should be renamed?

"Context" is evaluated by:

- Actions taken vs. viewpoints held – typically, actions taken to advance racist or exclusionary viewpoints are considered more severe than holding racist or exclusionary viewpoints alone.
- Public vs. private persona – typically, actions taken or viewpoints held as part of an individual's public persona are considered more severe than actions taken or viewpoints held as part of an individual's private persona.
- The progression of an individual's viewpoints and life as a whole – typically, where an individual attempted to redress or rectify racist or exclusionary viewpoints or actions later in life, this is considered less severe than consistently acting on or holding racist or exclusionary viewpoints throughout life.
- Whether and how an individual's actions and viewpoints corresponded to OSU's mission and OSU's and society's values at the time – OSU's mission and OSU's and society's values have changed over time. In some circumstances, an individual's racist or exclusionary views may have aligned or been supported by the institutional and societal values of the time. How these value systems interacted should be considered in evaluating the "context" of an individual's life.
- How the OSU community engages with the "context" of an individual's life – the "context" of an individual's life will resonate differently with different community members. As an institution, we must be able to engage in difficult but constructive conversations around difference in opinion regarding the "context" of an individual.

Overall, consideration of "context" as part of a renaming request must acknowledge and engage with the complexity of an individual's life and the time in which the individual lived. People are complex. Viewpoints and actions are complex. Society and institutions are complex. Reducing an individual's life to "bad" or "good" denies us the inquiry necessary to acquire understanding and engage in informed restoration. And by grappling with "context" as a university community, the proposed process also allows us to critically examine both the viewpoints and actions of an individual, but also our own institutional values, practices and policies that may have enabled or supported racist or exclusionary views.

If a renaming request meets the evaluation criteria:

- Outcome: Following a vote, the ANC will produce a written report documenting its evaluation and recommendation to the President that a building be renamed.
- Process: The process and timeline for the renaming evaluation will be outlined on renaming request site. The written report will be posted online. In addition to a recommendation to rename, permanent education to allow for ongoing community education and engagement should be considered and recommendations for permanent education included in the written report.

If a renaming request does not meet the evaluation criteria:

- Outcome: Following a vote, the ANC will produce a written report documenting its evaluation and recommendation to the President that a building not be renamed.
- Process: The process and timeline for the renaming evaluation will be outlined on renaming request site. The written report will be posted online. Where renaming is not recommended, permanent education to allow for ongoing community education and engagement should be considered and recommendations for permanent education included in the written report.

The recommended renaming request evaluation process is outlined visually in **Attachment 1**.

IV. Recommended Next Steps

If the ANC adopts the recommended renaming evaluation process outlined herein, the Committee also recommends that the ANC take important next steps to address community concerns surrounding the names of four buildings on the OSU Corvallis campus – Arnold Dining Center, Avery Lodge, Benton Hall and Gill Coliseum. As discussed above, there is evidence to suggest that the namesakes of these buildings may have held or espoused racist or exclusionary views.

The Committee recommends the following in the adoption of a renaming request evaluation process:

1. The ANC should initiate the renaming request evaluation process for each of the four buildings – Arnold Dining Center, Avery Lodge, Benton Hall and Gill Coliseum.
2. Consideration of the renaming requests should proceed one building at a time to allow for necessary consideration and iteration of the renaming request evaluation process. The namesakes of these buildings have unique contexts and considering the buildings one-by-one allows the OSU community to engage with their legacies individually, and reduces the risk of conflating distinct issues.
3. The ANC should begin its evaluation with Arnold Dining Center and proceed in alphabetical order.
4. The preliminary evaluation for Arnold Dining Center should begin on March 20, 2017 and be completed by April 17, 2017. If a full evaluation is recommended, it should commence with community education and engagement on April 17, 2017 and be completed by May 15, 2017. The President should make a final decision regarding a renaming request for Arnold Dining Center no later than June 5, 2017.
5. The preliminary evaluation for Avery Lodge should begin on April 17, 2017 and be

completed by May 15, 2017. If a full evaluation is recommended, it should commence with community education and engagement on May 15, 2017 and be completed by June 12, 2017. The President should make a final decision regarding a renaming request for Avery Lodge no later than June 26, 2017.

6. To ensure community involvement, education and engagement in the renaming request evaluation process for Benton Hall and Gill Coliseum, the Committee recommends that the preliminary evaluation occur in the late summer. If a full evaluation is recommended, it should commence at the beginning of the 2017-2018 academic year and progress on a similar schedule, with final decisions to be made regarding Benton Hall and Gill Coliseum during fall term.

In addition to these immediate next steps, the Committee recommends the ANC design a consistent and transparent policy and process to select names for university buildings and places.

V. Conclusion

The Building and Place Names Advisory Committee unanimously submits these foregoing recommendations and looks forward to continued engagement around this important issue.

The Building and Place Names Advisory Committee

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Attachment 1

Building and Place Name Advisory Committee Renaming Request Evaluation Process

Step 1. Renaming request

Request to rename submitted to Architectural Naming Committee (ANC)

- Any community member may submit a renaming request for evaluation
- In some cases, appropriate for ANC to initiate its own process
- If request meets threshold for full renaming evaluation (as indicated below), ANC initiates full renaming analysis
- Submission requirements:
 - Narrative explaining basis for renaming request
 - Citation to references
 - Attachments to support renaming request

Step 2. Preliminary evaluation of renaming request by ANC sub-committee

Criteria to consider: Considering contemporary OSU values, does sufficient documentation exist to demonstrate that the actions or viewpoints of the individual for whom a building or place is named may be inconsistent with OSU's mission to create an inclusive diverse, and equitable educational environment?

Yes

ANC sub-committee evaluates request to determine whether to advance to full renaming analysis

- Outcome:
 - Written sub-committee report recommending ANC renaming evaluation
- Process to provide:
 - Transparency in process; written report posted for review

No

ANC sub-committee does not advance request to full renaming analysis

- Outcome:
 - Written communication on rationale for decision
- Process to provide:
 - Transparency in process
 - Feedback to requestor where appropriate

Step 3. Full evaluation of renaming request by full ANC

Criteria to consider: Was the "context" of an individual's life/legacy inconsistent with OSU's contemporary mission and values? "Context" is evaluated by (1) actions v. viewpoint; (2) public v. private persona; (3) progression of an individual's viewpoints and life as a whole; (4) whether an individual's actions and viewpoints corresponded with OSU's mission and OSU's and society's values at the time; and (5) how the OSU community engages with the "context" of an individual's life

Yes

Full ANC makes recommendation to President to rename

- Outcome:
 - Written report on analysis and recommendation to President on the renaming evaluation request
- Process to provide:
 - ANC conducts vote on renaming request
 - Engagement with content-area experts
 - Community engagement and outreach; transparency in process
 - Permanent education at building or place

No

Full ANC committee does not make recommendation to President to rename

- Outcome:
 - Written report on analysis and recommendation on the renaming evaluation request
- Process to provide:
 - ANC conducts vote on renaming
 - Community engagement and outreach
 - Transparency in process
 - Permanent education at building or place