

Report on the Chancellor’s Advisory Committee on History and Contextualization

In response to the Institutions of Higher Learning Board of Trustees’ request to receive a report on the status of the recommendations made by the Chancellor’s Advisory Committee on History and Contextualization (CACHC) at the University of Mississippi, this is a summary of the status of the work conducted on the recommendations. The full report is attached as an Appendix.

Phase I:

The committee convened and proceeded to solicit community input. They conducted an open, online submission process. Based on the information received and their deliberations, they made seven recommendations regarding:

1. Johnson Commons
2. Vardaman Hall
3. Barnard Observatory
4. Longstreet Hall
5. Lamar Hall
6. George Hall
7. Construction of a walking tour to include nine stops

After meeting with Chancellor Jeffrey Vitter, he approved recommendations one through six and added a charge to contextualize the use of enslaved labor in the construction of the following structures on campus:

- a. Barnard Observatory
- b. Croft Hall
- c. The Lyceum
- d. Hilgard Cut

Phase II:

At a subsequent meeting, the Chancellor approved contextualization of the Tiffany stained-glass window in Ventress Hall.

During deliberations of the sites to be contextualized, a committee member asked if they could “contextualize the University Cemetery by placing headstones recognizing the Confederate dead in the University’s Cemetery.” The Chancellor indicated he would consider the recommendation if it were made by the full committee. A subcommittee made a recommendation to the full committee. “After discussion with the full committee, a proposal was amended to include an additional recommendation to recognize the service of men from Lafayette County and north Mississippi who served in the United States Colored Troops during the Civil War with an appropriate monument on the campus. The amended proposal was approved by a unanimous vote of the full committee.”

The committee sought input from the community online and in two listening sessions.

The committee sought assistance from a consultant, Kathy Shinnick, who is a public historian and University of Mississippi graduate.

The committee followed a set of guiding principles based on best practices. In terms of renaming or contextualizing, the committee followed Yale University's Committee to Establish Principles on Renaming (CEPR). Key CEPR principles include:

- A. *Presumptions: Renaming on account of values should be an exceptional event.*
 - 1. *There is a strong presumption against renaming a building on the basis of the values associated with its namesake. Such a renaming should be considered only in exceptional circumstances.*
 - 2. *The presumption against renaming is at its strongest when a building has been named for someone who made major contributions to the University.*
- B. *Principles to be considered: Sometimes renaming on the basis of values is warranted.*
 - 1. *Is a principal legacy of the namesake fundamentally at odds with the mission of the University?*
 - 2. *Was the relevant principal legacy significantly contested in the time and place in which the namesake lived?*
 - 3. *Did the University, at the time of the naming, honor a namesake for reasons that are fundamentally at odds with the mission of the University?*
 - 4. *Does a building whose namesake has a principal legacy fundamentally at odds with the University's mission, or which was named for reasons fundamentally at odds with the University's mission, play a substantial role in forming community at the University?*
- C. *Decisions to retain a name or to rename come with obligations of nonerasure, contextualization, and process.*
 - 1. *When a name is altered, there are obligations on the University to ensure that the removal does not have the effect of erasing history.*
 - 2. *When a name is retained, there may be obligations on the University to ensure that preservation does not have the effect of distorting history.*
 - 3. *The University ought to adopt a formal process for considering whether to alter a building name on account of the values associated with the namesake; such a process should incorporate community input and scholarly expertise.*

Recommendations and Progress

1. Clarifying the Namesake of Johnson Commons – Completed

Archival materials indicate that the building was named for Paul B. Johnson Sr. and the recommendation was to make that clear. The committee recommended that the namesake be specified by adding "Sr." to the name currently displayed on the building.

2. Renaming Vardaman Hall – *Not Yet Renovated and, Therefore, Not Completed*

The committee found Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar II and Augustus Baldwin Longstreet to have "unexceptional relationships to [the] moral horrors" of their time and therefore be

legitimate namesakes for buildings on our campus, according to the Yale CEPR. Using these same criteria, the committee deemed that James K. Vardaman, however, was an individual who "actively promoted some morally odious practice, or dedicated much of [his life] to upholding that practice." Vardaman, especially in contrast with Lamar or Longstreet, must be considered "exceptional" and therefore "distinctly unworthy of honor." The committee concluded that "Vardaman's brief, and largely negative, interactions with the University suggest that no significant part of the University's history would be elided through renaming." As a result, the committee did recommend renaming Vardaman Hall during the hall's "imminent renovation."

3. Contextualization for Barnard Observatory – Completed

Frederick A.P. Barnard (1809-1889) was the third president and first chancellor of the University of Mississippi, serving from 1856-1861. Barnard also found himself enmeshed in a significant controversy regarding slavery.

4. Contextualization for Longstreet Hall – Completed

This building was dedicated in honor of Augustus Baldwin Longstreet (1790-1870), the second president of the University of Mississippi. Among his responsibilities as president, Longstreet, a slaveowner, managed several enslaved laborers, both on the University campus and on a farm near Abbeville, the latter owned by his son-in-law, Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar II.

5. Contextualization for Lamar Hall – Completed

In 1977, this building was dedicated in honor of Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar II (1825-1893). He was a faculty member, politician, Secretary of the Interior, and Supreme Court Justice. He was chiefly responsible for writing the State's Ordinance of Succession, was a slave owner, and played an active role in dismantling Reconstruction in Mississippi to the detriment of the state's African American citizens.

6. Contextualization for George Hall – Completed

In 1920, this building was dedicated in honor of James Zachariah George (1826-1897). Born in Georgia, George moved with his family to Mississippi in 1834, settling two years later in Carroll County. He was responsible for creating the "Mississippi Plan," which was a program of voter intimidation, violent repression, and riot aimed at returning his state to white Democratic rule. George and others crafted a new state constitution that effectively reduced the number of qualified black Mississippi voters from 147,205 to 8,615.

7. Contextualization for the University's Enslaved Laborers – Completed

The first buildings on the University's historic Circle were constructed using the labor of enslaved African Americans. This plaque recognizes their contributions and lists those known to have played a role.

8. Contextualization for the Ventress Stained-Glass Window – Completed

The first panel depicts the students drilling as soldiers in front of Barnard Observatory. The middle panel portrays a battle scene, with the battle flag of the Army of Northern Virginia flying amid the carnage. Some newspaper reports stated that the battle scene was the first battle the

"University Greys" fought at First Manassas. However, the battle flag of the Army of Northern Virginia was not present at that early battle. Others believe the battle scene is the famous Pickett's Charge on the third day of the battle of Gettysburg, in which the "University Greys" suffered 100 percent casualties – killed, wounded, or captured. The third panel depicts the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox Court House in Virginia.

The smaller panels include the Delta Gamma anchor, the Psi chapter's symbol, and the Latin phrase, "Pietate Alumnorum," in honor of the University of Mississippi alumni who served in the Civil War.

*9. Recommendations Regarding the Confederate Dead in the University's Cemetery and the U.S. Colored Troops from Lafayette County – **Not Completed***

The committee recommends the placement of headstones for the Confederate dead in the University's Cemetery to recognize their sacrifice. It also recommended the placement of an appropriate marker to recognize the men from Lafayette County who served in the Union Army as part of the United States Colored Troops during the Civil War, and in acknowledging their efforts to bring secession and slavery to an end. The committee strongly recommended that these linked efforts proceed together.

Activities conducted to date include the convening of two separate committees – one for the cemetery and one to make recommendations regarding commemoration of the U.S. Colored Troops – to discuss the strategies to enact these recommendations. The committee led the use of ground-penetrating radar of the cemetery to ascertain the location of the graves. They also had discussions about the most appropriate strategy to place markers in the cemetery. Both committees were chaired by the late Dr. John Neff, a University of Mississippi history professor.

Further Recommendations

*1. Release of the full text of the report – **Completed***

Available online at

<https://context.wp2.olemiss.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/89/2017/07/ChancellorAdvisoryCommitteeFinalReport.pdf>

*2. Host an unveiling ceremony – **Completed***

Hosted March 2, 2018

<https://news.olemiss.edu/university-unveils-plaques-significant-moment-history/>

*3. Digital release of the markers installed – **Completed***

<https://context.olemiss.edu/implementation/>

The following recommendations were made by the committee, and Chancellor Vitter indicated that while he would not support their implementation by the University, he would encourage

faculty to pursue these recommendations and activities as appropriate within their disciplines and areas of expertise.

4. *Form a Chancellor's Standing Committee on History and Context – Not Completed*

The CACHC recommended the creation of a standing committee on History and Context charged with providing oversight and coordination of the scholarly inquiry efforts by faculty, reporting to the chancellor on their results, and making recommendations based on those results to University leadership on request or where otherwise appropriate. Additionally, the Faculty Senate passed a resolution recommending that the Chancellor form a standing committee on History and Context chaired by the Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion, with representation from the Faculty Senate, Staff Council, Associated Student Body, Graduate Student Council, and additional members appointed by the Chancellor. This committee will be charged with ongoing efforts to address the difficult history of the University.

5. *Host a yearlong series of educational events and discussions about the University's history – Not Completed*

The series would provide valuable opportunities for members of the University community to contribute their stories and to discuss different aspects of University history. The events could feature guest speakers and workshops designed to allow community members to create and develop their own stories in relation to University history.

6. *Develop an extensive, web-based presentation of the University's history and related materials – Not Completed*

As further research into the University's history continues along a variety of fronts, a digital platform, along with appropriate support staff, will give the University the broad reach it will need to disseminate the results of that research to a global audience promptly, in keeping with our institutional mission, and the flexibility it will need to update historical information as new knowledge emerges.

7. *Build or allot space for a Museum of University History – Not Completed*

Much of the American story can be told from the point of view of our campus: Indian Removal, Settling the West, Slavery, the Civil War, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, the Civil Rights Movement, and so much more. Our University has played a pivotal role in these important historical events. By creating a permanent place where we can tell our story we can create a resource that will be of great value to our students and the larger community. This is another vital element in the effort to gather and share the knowledge generated by the University's ongoing contextualization efforts and by other forms of historical inquiry into the institution's past.

8. *Hire a full-time public historian – Not Completed*

The University should hire a full-time public historian to develop effective strategies for interpreting our campus as a public historic site and to play a leadership role in those interpretive efforts.

9. *Design and construct a walking tour of University history – Not Completed*

To tell a more complete version of the UM story, the University should design and construct a walking tour of University history, as proposed in the Committee's Phase I recommendations, in the near future.