

Update on Renaming of Campus Spaces

President's Office <presofc@dickinson.edu>

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To: Students <students@lists.dickinson.edu>; Faculty/Staff <employees@lists.dickinson.edu>



To the Dickinson community:

I am pleased to announce that the Board of Trustees last week unanimously approved a resolution renaming Cooper Hall as Spradley-Young Hall. This renaming honors Henry Spradley and Robert Young, two formerly enslaved men and longtime college employees who helped integrate the Dickinson campus in the 19th century. During the next academic year, we will hold a renaming ceremony to mark this change and invite the descendants of both Henry and Mina Spradley and Robert and Matilda Young to participate.

The board also approved unanimously the renaming of East College Gate as the Pinkney Family Gate, honoring both Carrie and Noah Pinkney, who were popular African American food sellers on campus for decades in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Currently, Noah Pinkney is the only formerly enslaved person recognized on campus, but his plaque, near the gate, makes no mention of his wife and partner, Carrie Pinkney. Descendants will also be invited to attend the renaming ceremony.

These changes are the first important steps toward more accurately reflecting the history of Dickinson and those who have contributed to it. They were made possible because of the research completed by Matt Pinsker, professor of history, and the team of students who worked with him. Their findings were exhibited at the House Divided studio in 2018 and published in the [Dickinson & Slavery Report](#) in 2019. The House Divided Project launched these efforts to help get the community talking about the history of Dickinson's ties to slavery and anti-slavery. For the past three years, nearly a dozen student interns have worked diligently on this initiative, including two of our current graduating seniors, Dana Marecheau and Cooper Wingert.

In true Dickinson spirit, this became an all-campus effort, with the community having an opportunity to weigh in on the research gathered as well as plans for the path forward. An ad hoc committee made up of representatives from the student body, alumni, faculty and staff was appointed to consider the findings late in 2019. That committee issued its recommendations in January.

These renamings are important. However, our work on this issue is just getting started and must continue if we are to inclusively honor our history. Two other recommendations from the committee were also approved by the board and provide an idea of how we will continue

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- The House Divided Project will be tasked with developing content for public explanations about these name changes that can eventually be disseminated on the college website and through exterior wayside markers and interior lobby exhibit panels. We also believe the college should continue to try to find ways to make the Dickinson & Slavery exhibit at 61 N. West Street more accessible to a wider public and to consider developing a program of additional campus wayside markers that can help better explain the story of Dickinson College's ties to slavery and anti-slavery.
- The President's Office should set a new date in 2022 for further consideration of other potential name changes to the remaining nine residence halls known as "The Quads," which first received their historic namesakes in 1991, and also to Montgomery House (current home to the Theatre & Dance Department). This second stage of the renaming process should be transparent for the entire community, including students and alumni, and should be open-minded about recognizing any type of historic college figure, without simply focusing on their ties to slavery or anti-slavery. We do not expect that all of these buildings will be renamed, but the goal in 2022 should be to create greater diversity in our campus commemoration efforts while also continuing to recognize those Dickinsonians who have made the most significant contributions to our institution, our region and our nation.

I want to thank the House Divided team and all the committees and individuals on campus and among alumni who have taken the time to voice their thoughts on these important issues. I look forward to continuing to work with all of you on this important initiative.

Sincerely,

Margee M. Ensign

President

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