

July 26, 2021

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Dear Trustees:

As you know, a process has been underway on the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, campus to consider the University's association with the name and legacy of the late Senator J. William Fulbright, including the naming of the J. William Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences and the location of the J. William Fulbright statue outside of the Old Main building. Senator Fulbright's presence on campus has become controversial because of his record of opposing Civil Rights legislation and racial integration. At the same time, the Fulbright name is known worldwide for its association with the Fulbright International Exchange Program, which promotes international cooperation and understanding among the U.S. and countries around the world through education. This complex legacy was considered at length by a campus committee as well as by former Chancellor Joseph E. Steinmetz, who made a series of recommendations to me which are discussed in the enclosed letter he sent on May 19. This review process also considered the naming of the Charles Hillman Brough Commons dining facility because of the former governor's role in the Elaine Massacre.

As is discussed in the letter, Dr. Steinmetz recommended retaining the name of the Fulbright College, exploring the relocation of the Fulbright statue to a more suitable location where it can be properly contextualized, and removing the Brough name from the dining facility, because of his association with the massacre and his limited connection to the University and its students, faculty and staff. I have been engaged with this issue for some time with former Chancellor Steinmetz and have visited with many University stakeholders both for and against the recommendations that were submitted to me. Since Dr. Steinmetz's departure, I have discussed the issues with acting Chancellor Bill Kincaid, and we both agree that it is in the best interest of the University to move forward with presenting recommendations to the Board on these issues. My review of the letter and discussions with stakeholders have led me to agree with the recommendation to retain the name of Fulbright College and agree with the need to contextualize the Fulbright statue in a way that presents the full legacy of Senator Fulbright. However, since Act 1003 of 2021 prevents removing or relocating monuments on public property absent receipt of a waiver from the Arkansas History Commission, I believe the statue should be contextualized in its current location. If a path presents itself at a later time to consider the relocation of the statue that is consistent with state law, the Board can revisit this issue. Additionally, my review of the recommendations has led me to agree with the reasoning for removing the Brough name from the dining facility.

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With the above context in mind, I have enclosed two resolutions for your consideration:

1. The first resolution regarding the Fulbright name and statue affirms the name of the Fulbright College because of its association with promoting international understanding and world peace through education. The resolution acknowledges that Act 1003 of 2021 prevents moving or relocating monuments on public property and directs the University to add contextualization to the Fulbright statue in its current location “that affirms the University’s commitment to racial equality and acknowledges Senator Fulbright’s complex legacy, including his record on international affairs, Civil Rights legislation, and racial integration.”
2. The second resolution discusses the concerns regarding the naming of Brough Commons, including the limited connection of Governor Brough to the University and its students, faculty and staff, and directs that the name be removed from the dining facility.

I recommend approval of both resolutions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donald R. Bobbitt", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Donald R. Bobbitt
President
Charles E. Scharlau Presidential Leadership Chair

Attachments