

School/Facility Naming Policy Criteria Resources:

Appendix 1: Yale Renaming Standards

John C. Calhoun graduated from Yale in 1804. He served as US Vice President, Secretary of State, Secretary of War, and Senator. According to current Yale President Salovey, Calhoun was, “a white supremacist, an ardent defender of slavery as ‘a positive good,’ someone whose views hardened over the course of his life, who died essentially criticizing the Declaration of Independence and its emphasis on all men being created equal.” Calhoun was considered an intellectual forefather of the Confederacy. Yale named one of its residential colleges (or dormitory housing systems) after Calhoun.

Yale Committee established principles to guide the university leaders when considering renaming a building.

- Is the “principal legacy of the person” (i.e. what key activity or advocacy is the person most known for) fundamentally at odds with the university’s mission?
- Was that legacy debated during the person’s life?
- Did the university, at the time of a naming, honor the person for reasons that are fundamentally at odds with the mission of the university?
- Does the building play an important role in creating community on campus?

REFERENCES:

[Committee to Establish Principles on Renaming – Report \(November 21, 2016\)](#) – Adopted by Yale on November 28, 2016

[From YaleNews: “Report Outlines Principles for Renaming Campus Buildings”](#)

Noting that the members heard many diverse and passionate views, the committee members wrote that they did not aim to produce a report “dictated by majority opinion or by the intensity with which opinions were held. We conceived of our task, however, as developing a reasoned answer, not necessarily the most popular answer. In this respect, every suggestion made us better students of the issues involved.”

The report begins: “**Erasing names** is a matter of special concern, because those names are, in part, a catalog of the people whom the university has thought worthy of honor. Removing such names may obscure important information about our past,” says the report. “To change, however, is not always to erase. Indeed, change is indispensable in a university that has evolved over more than 300 years. ... A university’s ongoing obligation is to navigate change without effacing the past.”

... In its building names and its campus symbols, the university communicates values, confers honor, and expresses gratitude to those who have contributed to its mission. In other words, the university itself speaks through its building names. ... One of the values the

university rightly communicates is the importance of genuine inclusiveness for all those who will make it a leading center for research and teaching in the years to come."

From The Nation: Feb. 17, 2017 ["When Does Renaming a Building Make Sense?"](#)

Like the undergraduates who had called for change at Yale, the committee report appealed to the institution's values:

- *"Is a principal legacy of the namesake fundamentally at odds with the mission of the University?"*
- *If the answer was yes, three further principles offered circumstances under which a name change on the basis of values would be especially appropriate:*
 - *if the namesake's actions and ideas were a subject of debate even in their own lifetime,*
 - *if the university knowingly acted against its own mission in choosing a certain namesake, and*
 - *if the building was central to community life and unity.*

It was not the committee's job to decide whether to rename Calhoun, and the principles themselves avoided specific reference to him. Still, in the days following the report's release, there seemed to be no doubt in anyone's mind that under those principles, John C. Calhoun was unfit to be the namesake of a residential college at Yale.

The Washington Post: February 12, 2017

["Yale Renames Calhoun College Because of Historical Ties to White Supremacy and Slavery"](#)

NEW HAVEN, Conn. — Yale University will rename one of its residential colleges, replacing the name of an alumnus remembered as an advocate of slavery with that of an alumna (*Rear Admiral Grace M. Hopper*) who was a pioneering mathematician and computer scientist who helped transform the way people use technology. . . .

The decision to rename Calhoun College reverses one made last spring, when Yale President Peter Salovey said he did not want to erase history, but confront it and learn from it.