

Revocation Guidelines

Removing a name from a named space is a serious step that cannot be taken lightly or hastily. It should occur only under exceptional and narrow circumstances. These guidelines are designed to guide that process.

Authority for revocation of named facilities, programs, academic units, and projects rests with the University Board of Trustees through the University Advancement Committee.

If the benefactor's or honoree's reputation changes substantially so that the continued use of that name may compromise the public trust, dishonor the University's standards, or otherwise be contrary to the best interest of the University, the naming may be revoked. However, caution must be taken when, with the passage of time, the standards and achievements deemed to justify a naming action may change and observers of a later age may deem those who have conferred a naming honor at an earlier age to have erred. Namings should not be altered simply because later observers would have made different judgements.

The Board of Trustees may begin the process of reconsidering a named space at their own initiative, at the Chancellor's recommendation, or in response to a written request submitted to the Vice Chancellor for University Advancement.

The process for deciding whether to remove a naming designation should reflect a consistent set of standards, a careful and deliberate balancing process, and an acknowledgement of the complex intersection between the lessons of our past and present, the lived and learned experiences from that time to present day, and the contemporary mission of the University.

Submitting a written request for revocation of a named space

Revocation requests should be submitted in writing to the Vice Chancellor for University Advancement.

A written request for revocation of a named space should include:

- The specific conduct by the namesake of the named space that is injurious to the reputation of the University or may compromise the public trust, dishonor the University's values, or otherwise be contrary to the best interests of the University.
- The character of the named individual or organization and the extent of the harm to the University caused by continuing to honor the namesake.
- The sources and strength of the evidence that supports the allegation(s) of the harm.
- Alignment of the allegation(s) with the principles detailed below.

Principles for evaluating a written request for revocation of a named space

The University must ensure that any requests to remove a name from a named space are considered using a consistent approach to weighing and balancing the relevant factors and aforementioned principles.

Written requests for removing a name are more compelling when the scholarly historical evidence is clear and convincing and when they satisfy one or more of the following criteria:

- The namesake was found to have committed a felony or otherwise engaged in objectionable conduct prior to or during that individual's lifetime following the naming recognition.
- The objectionable conduct in question was central to a namesake's career, public persona, or life as a whole.
- Allegations of objectionable behavior are supported by documentary evidence that demonstrates both the extent and the intentionality of a namesake's actions.
- Honoring a namesake demonstrably injures the reputation of the University or may compromise the public trust, dishonor the University's values, or otherwise be contrary to the best interests of the University; or significantly contributes to an environment that excludes some members of the University community from opportunities to learn, thrive, and succeed.
- The removal of the name would not stifle viewpoint diversity or fail to acknowledge the historical complexity or holistic contributions of the individual to the University or the public.

Written requests for removing a name are weaker when one or more of the following elements are present:

- The namesake's offensive behavior or viewpoints were conventional at its time and other aspects of the namesake's life and work are especially noteworthy to the University or the greater community.
- Despite the evidence of objectionable behavior or views, there is also evidence of a significant level of evolution or moderation of the namesake's behavior and/or views.

Opportunities for contextualization, education, and preservation of historical knowledge to advance the University's mission and values must be considered in any final determination on the potential revocation of a named space.

Revocation procedure

Once a written revocation request is received, it will proceed as described below:

1. The Vice Chancellor for University Advancement will present the Chancellor with the revocation request and they will determine if it should be presented to the University Advancement Committee (“the Committee”). The Vice Chancellor for University Advancement will communicate their decision to the requesting party.
2. If it is determined that the request warrants presentation to the Committee, the Vice Chancellor for University Advancement will present the request for the Committee’s review at its next scheduled meeting or a special called meeting for that purpose.
3. In conducting its review, the Committee may consider the strength of the scholarly historical evidence and take into account the principles of evaluating requests. The Committee may choose to invite comments from all interested members of the community.
4. The Committee will discuss and submit their recommendation to the Board of Trustees at its next scheduled meeting or a special called meeting for that purpose.
5. The Board of Trustees will review the revocation request and the Committee’s recommendation, and will vote.

If the request for revocation is declined, the naming will remain intact. The Board will determine if the University community would benefit from increased contextualization in connection with the named space. The University will initiate appropriate actions based on the Board’s determination. A response explaining the decision to the requesting party from the Chair of the Board of Trustees will be provided.

Once a request has been declined, there is a rebuttable presumption that the Board will not reconsider the decision for two years absent a recommendation from the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor for University Advancement supporting reconsideration based on a material change in circumstances or discovery of material information previously unknown or that did not exist when the prior decision was made.

If the request for revocation is approved, the revocation will be effective immediately, keeping in mind the time it may take to remove signage and communicate the name removal. A response that the name has been revoked will be communicated to the requesting party from the Chair of the Board of Trustees.