



Jan. 26, 2021

Dear Professor Montgomery and Members of the President's Task Force on Anti-Racism, Equity and Inclusion:

Thank you for your Dec. 9, 2020, letter updating me on the progress of the task force and forwarding recommendations based on the work of the subcommittees during the fall semester and approved unanimously by the entire task force.

I appreciate your commitment to this endeavor and the considerable amount of time and energy everyone on the task force has devoted to addressing racial and ethnic disparities on campus and advancing FSU's diversity, equity and inclusion goals.

I also want to acknowledge the faculty, staff and others who have made presentations to the task force on a range of subjects as well as those in the FSU and Tallahassee community who have provided comments in the virtual meetings or reached out to me or the panel to share ideas. It is clear that many people care deeply about these issues.

When I convened this task force last summer, I envisioned an action-oriented, results-driven group. I know that you have been meeting every week throughout the semester, and I am impressed by how much this group has accomplished in a short period of time.

You have addressed difficult issues that are critical to moving our university forward, and I was pleased to receive your initial round of recommendations with regard to recruitment, retention and diversity, campus climate and historical legacy. I have given careful consideration to each of the eight recommendations, and my decisions are outlined below:

The recommendations from the Recruitment, Retention and Diversity Training Subcommittee, as approved unanimously by the Task Force:

- 1) **ACCEPT the recommendation that the Office of Human Resources secures and utilizes a national higher education database and networking tool geared toward the recruitment of underrepresented faculty and staff. The university should appropriate a recurring \$15,000 annual allocation, with any necessary future incremental increases, in the institutionalization of these measures.**

This recommendation aligns with FSU's diversity and inclusion goals outlined in our strategic plan, specifically with regard to expanding efforts to hire and retain a diverse faculty and staff. I have asked Associate Vice President for Human Resources Renisha Gibbs to identify and begin using a national higher education database immediately in order to ensure FSU has every opportunity to reach and recruit the immense talent across the country.

- 2) **ACCEPT the recommendation that the Office of the Provost expands the Deans' evaluation process to include accountability measures surrounding the recruitment, retention, and promotion of junior and senior faculty from underrepresented backgrounds.**

The Office of the Provost is committed to advancing FSU's diversity, equity and inclusion goals as outlined in our strategic plan, specifically with regard to hiring, retaining and promoting faculty. Because the deans of FSU's major divisions and 18 colleges are largely responsible for these decisions, I have asked Provost Sally McRorie to include additional measures in the evaluations of the deans to ensure accountability.

- 3) **ACCEPT the recommendation that the Offices of the Provost and Faculty Development and Advancement increase funding to the underrepresented faculty hiring initiative, including funds for new hires, additional funding for academic units to retain under-represented faculty lines, and an extension of additional funds beyond the current three-year period. Targeted and cluster hiring should receive special consideration.**

Additional funding will allow FSU to continue to be competitive in hiring underrepresented faculty. In addition, FSU has a proven record of successful targeted and cluster hires, and we should continue to employ this strategy in appropriate circumstances. I have asked Provost Sally McRorie and Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement Janet Kistner to allocate funding for academic units to enhance these hiring initiatives.

The recommendations from the Campus Climate Subcommittee, as approved unanimously by the Task Force:

- 1) **ACCEPT the recommendation that the Office of Institutional Research facilitates a timeline for and constructs new comprehensive campus climate surveys geared toward graduate/undergraduate students, faculty, staff, and alumni with a fall 2021 target starting date. The Office also will devise systematic ways of centralizing the results of surveys for broad access, and the University will institutionalize funding to support these efforts as part of an ongoing commitment to an assessment of the campus climate.**

A climate survey will provide important feedback from the campus community that will help us evaluate our progress with regard to our diversity, equity and inclusion goals and identify areas of improvement. It also will allow us to see how we are living up to our values of a welcoming campus environment where everyone is treated fairly and with respect.

I've asked the Office of Institutional Research to facilitate the survey and serve as a central clearinghouse to share the results publicly and across campus. The surveys should be archived to provide benchmarks and guide future action.

- 2) **ACCEPT the recommendation that the University institutionalizes university-wide events focusing on anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion, such as, but not limited to, the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration, the LatinX Celebration, and the Golden Tribe Lecture Series through recurring funding structures. I also ACCEPT the recommendation that the University provide recurring funding for new events surrounding anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion, including a new speaker series.**

Florida State University is committed to providing students, faculty, staff, and community members access to world-class speakers through academically focused events, such as the ones described in this recommendation. I fully support the mission of the Golden Tribe Lecture Series to engage students in issues and dialogue that will positively benefit their overall academic, scholastic, or humanitarian experience. I agree there is a need for more of these opportunities.

I have asked Vice President for Student Affairs Amy Hecht to work with Associate Vice President for Human Resources Renisha Gibbs to determine appropriate recurring funding sources, expand participant access to events and develop supplemental programming focused on anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion. In addition, efforts shall be made to ensure speakers and programs reflect the diversity of thought and experience of campus populations and society at large and are available to faculty, staff and students.

The recommendations from the Historical Legacy Subcommittee, as approved unanimously by the Task Force, are as follows:

- 1) **ACCEPT the recommendation that Francis W. Eppes' name be removed from the College of Criminology building by Jan. 31, 2021 and that an educational/historical record of the building having previously been named for Eppes be provided on campus. The record would include an outline of the process for reviewing the recognition and the reasoning for our recommendation that Eppes' name be removed.**

While the building that bears the name Eppes Hall is one of the university's oldest, it has only been known as such for a relatively short period of time. In 2000, then-President Talbot "Sandy" D'Alemberte and the Board of Regents approved a proposal to name the psychology building after Francis W. Eppes, who, at the time, was believed to be the founder of FSU's institutional predecessor. After the psychology department moved to a new location on campus, Eppes Hall became the current home of the College of Criminology and Criminal Justice.

Eppes, the grandson of Thomas Jefferson and a former mayor of Tallahassee, had no connection to that particular building, nor to the academic disciplines of psychology or criminology. Research conducted by the 2017-2018 Advisory Panel on University Namings and Recognitions uncovered sufficient new evidence to dispute the claim that Eppes was the sole founder of FSU.

His role in the early days of FSU notwithstanding, Eppes was a slave owner and a justice of the peace who oversaw the capture of escaped slaves, and as such he should not be honored on our campus with a building in his name.

I am directing all appropriate units on campus to rename Eppes Hall the College of Criminology and Criminal Justice Building. A record of the building's relatively brief history as Eppes Hall and the reasons for the name change will be prepared and archived for historical purposes.

- 2) **ACCEPT the recommendation that the University administration pursues legislative action during the 2020-21 Florida governmental session, and continuing thereafter, to remove B.K. Roberts' name from the Law School building and, alternatively, provides contextualized recognition of B.K. Roberts at a designated location within the College of Law.**

The Florida Legislature designated the building's name via state law in 1973 and the removal of Roberts' name requires repealing that law. I accepted a similar recommendation from the Advisory Panel on University Namings and Recognitions in 2018, and this continues to be a priority for me.

Over the past two legislative sessions, FSU has lobbied legislators to sponsor action to formally remove Roberts' name from the building by repealing Chapter 73-370, Laws of Florida. This year, we're working closely with our local legislative delegation, and, at a Jan. 19 public hearing, the members unanimously approved draft bill language that would allow for the removal of the name. With their backing and resolutions of support from the FSU Board of Trustees and the FSU Faculty Senate, I'm hopeful the bill will move forward during the legislative session that begins March 2 and that we'll have a positive outcome on this matter.

I have never wavered in my support for this issue. As I said in 2018, "to keep the name of B.K. Roberts on the law school building would continue to honor someone whose decisions and actions do not reflect Florida State University's values or the rule of law."

I also accept the task force's recommendation to provide contextualized recognition of B.K. Roberts at a designated location within the College of Law. This would recognize Roberts' role in founding the law school, while acknowledging his more troublesome legacy as a Florida Supreme Court justice who wrote a majority opinion that refused to obey a U.S. Supreme Court ruling to allow a Black man to enroll in the University of Florida College of Law.

- 3) **ACCEPT the recommendation that the Francis W. Eppes Statue be removed permanently from open-air public display and curated with accurate historical context, perhaps in a museum or archival space.**

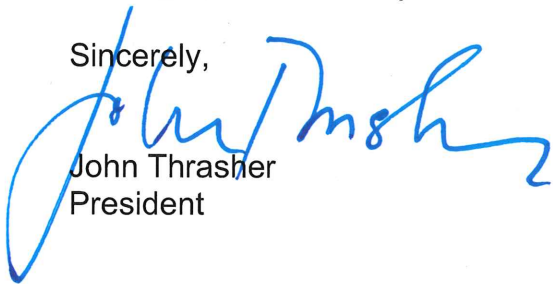
The Francis Eppes statue was removed from campus in July 2020 while this task force was beginning its work. I agree that the statue should not be returned to campus for display in the open air. To do so would venerate a man whose actions are not in keeping with Florida State University's values.

I have asked my administrative team to identify a museum or archival space to house the statue. If placed in the appropriate context, the statue would serve to educate the public about Eppes and his role in establishing FSU's institutional predecessor as well as provide an unvarnished account of his life as a slave owner and as a justice of the peace who oversaw the capture of escaped slaves.

In closing, I would again like to thank Professor Maxine Montgomery, as well as subcommittee chairs Dr. Brandon Bowden, Ms. Michelle Douglas and Professor Maxine Jones and the members of the task force for your service and commitment to Florida State University.

These recommendations will lead to a stronger and more just, equitable and inclusive future for all of us. You have already accomplished so much, and I look forward to hearing updates about your further progress this spring.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Thrasher", is written over the typed name and title.

John Thrasher  
President