

Union Council Resolution Regarding Named Spaces at Memorial Union **Wednesday, April 25, 2018**

The Wisconsin Union has a long history on the UW-Madison campus of working to provide a welcoming, inclusive and common gathering space for all members of the University community. Being a membership organization, the organization has been guided in its vision to be the heart and soul of the campus in this regard by working to advance its core values:

- Respect
- Inclusivity
- Relationships
- Leadership
- Learning
- Performance

It is in the spirit of living out our values, that the Union Council considered its response to the “Report to the Chancellor on the Ku Klux Klan at the University of Wisconsin-Madison” as well as the Chancellor’s action plan outlined in “Confronting our Campus History.” In addition, it is important to note that the Union commissioned an Inclusivity Study this spring to examine the extent to which students find Memorial Union, Union South and the Terrace to be inclusive. The results of that study are expected by the end of May 2018.

Union Council is grateful to the Ad Hoc Study Group that produced the report and to the Chancellor for a thoughtful and expansive response to the report’s recommendations. The Council brings attention to the following excerpt in the report in formulating its response:

“... the history the UW needs to confront was not the aberrant work of a few individuals but a pervasive culture of racial and religious bigotry, casual and unexamined in its prevalence, in which exclusion and indignity were routine, sanctions in the institution’s daily life, and unchallenged by its leaders. We therefore suggest that any focus on the renaming of particular campus facilities follow rather than precede the work of substantial institutional change ...”

While we agree that the priority for the UW-Madison campus should be systemic rather than symbolic change, an important element is missing from the report - the role of student programming in the named spaces. Members of the Wisconsin Union Directorate are asked to provide an array of diverse, thought-providing and relevant programs for the campus community in the two named spaces. The relatively unaddressed nature of this fact influenced Council’s response.

For nearly 90 years, student leaders at the Wisconsin Union have provided programming for all members of the campus community in these spaces - well before the spaces were named for

these men. The programming has attempted to meet the needs of each successive generation of students - always being produced by student-led committees. Increasingly, student programmers are having to respond to charges of racism from performers and students, due to lack of action from previous requests to properly address the named spaces. There have been specific requests to rename these spaces. Given these concerns, students have asked Union Council to consider the impact this has on the ability for the Union to live out its stated vision and values.

Union Council also expresses its concern over the release of the report so close to the end of the academic year. While some slippage from the original due date of December 1, 2017 can be expected, the release of the report on April 19, 2018 - just four business days before the last meeting of Union Council for the semester - has put the Council in a very untenable position. UW-Madison students have been waiting most of the year to see what the Union will do in response to the report. Even today (April 25, 2018), some students have announced their plans to file a hate and bias complaint if the names are not removed. Our time to seriously consider the implications of their complaint within the historical context of the named spaces is practically non-existent. Unfortunately, our ability to arrive at a satisfying decision by semester's end for these students has been severely compromised by the timing of the report.

Therefore, after reviewing the aforementioned report, the campus-level action items and in anticipation of receiving the results of our own Inclusivity Study, Union Council resolves the following:

1. We charge the Wisconsin Union to widely distribute the results of the Inclusivity Study with the greater campus community and to gather additional feedback and responses from students regarding the Study as well as our named spaces. An analysis and recommendations based on the Study and gathered feedback should be delivered to Council at its second meeting of the 2018 - 2019 term.
2. We will cover the Porter Butts Gallery and Fredric March Play Circle names at the beginning of the 2018 - 2019 school year while the process outlined in the document moves forward and Union Council makes a decision by the end of 2018. We ask that Union Marketing staff work with members of Union Council to create informative and educational signage along with the mechanism to capture feedback at the entrances of both spaces. In the meantime, the two spaces will be referred to generically on promotional pieces as "The Gallery" and "Play Circle".
3. We ask that members of Union Council serve on the summer design team for the public history project, co- chaired by Dr. Kantrowitz and Dr. Clark-Pujara.

4. We charge WUD students and staff to develop supplemental WUD programming that complements the related campus history project.
5. We request a new program initiative be developed to create a Social Justice Incubator at the Wisconsin Union to help address social justice issues on campus. A physical space, operating budget and funding sources (from campus or other sources) should be identified for the Incubator. A full proposal should be delivered to Council at its second meeting of the 2018 - 2019 term.
6. In order to support and ensure the timely completion of initiatives 1 through 5 - and to stay engaged in the necessary conversations this issue demands - Union Council will not go on hiatus this summer. The Council will continue to meet monthly (May, June, July and August), moving seamlessly into its regular meeting schedule in September 2018 and beyond.
7. We charge the 2018 - 2019 Union Officers to request quarterly meetings with the Chancellor to continue addressing the named spaces issue as well other Union-related business.
8. We charge the Wisconsin Union staff to develop new methods to accurately reflect the Union's history in signage and displays throughout the building.
9. We charge Union Council to make a firm decision on the naming issue by the end of 2018.
10. We request a clear and defined process for future naming of spaces with in the Wisconsin Union.