ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST CHANGING THE STADIUM NAME

and

ALTERNATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

REPORT of the BYRD STADIUM NAMING WORK GROUP

4 December 2015

Background and Charge
Over the last year, students at the University of Maryland, College Park have advocated that the President and the Board of Regents consider whether the football stadium should continue to bear the name of former President Harry C. “Curley” Byrd; these requests were communicated through a Student Senate vote as well as through individual student requests and communications. On September 28, 2015 President Loh charged the work group, made up of faculty, administrators, students, trustees and alumni with providing a report by December 11, 2015 addressing the following topics:

• Reasons/Information on why the name should be changed
• Reasons/Information on why the name should not be changed
• A list of alternatives to changing the name.

President Loh specifically asked that the report NOT make a recommendation on the name change. The report will be used to inform his decision and subsequent recommendation to the University System of Maryland Board of Regents.

The committee sought first to educate itself on the matter by organizing into a series of subgroups with the following tasks:

• Examine the history of Harry C. “Curley” Byrd’s presidency, with specific attention to his position and actions on racial segregation in higher education;
• Examine the societal context – specifically how other institutions of higher education are addressing requests to rename buildings, due to a history of racial discrimination associated with those individuals (a context which changed rapidly during the course of committee deliberations);
• Consider whether, how, and when the committee might engage the community in a broader discussion of these issues; and
• Examine the UMD and University System of Maryland building naming policies.

Once information from each of these subgroups was reported and considered by the full work group, the larger committee began the work of responding directly to the charge. All of the work group meetings were announced on the University website and open to the public. Between one and four community members were present at each meeting and time was allotted for public response/comment at the end of each meeting. With the exception of the draft of this final report, documents distributed to the committee were made available to observers. Minutes of the meeting were shared upon request.
The committee report includes the discussion below and a second document entitled: President Harry Clifton “Curley” Byrd, Biographical Notes. These two documents are the result of the Committee’s effort to consider carefully and judiciously the reasons for and against removing President Byrd’s name from the stadium by identifying the relevant facts and perspectives as well as presenting alternative actions that might be considered.

The societal context in which the committee has worked has been volatile, characterized by three important developments: (1) Student activism on college campuses confronting discrimination—past and present—gained national attention initially at the University of Missouri, Yale University, and Claremont McKenna College and rapidly spread to many other campuses across the nation; (2) A number of high-profile incidents of racial violence beginning in Ferguson, Missouri and spreading to other cities including Charleston, South Carolina became part of a growing national movement entitled Black Lives Matter, which called attention to contemporary acts of racial discrimination across the country and as close as Baltimore; (3) The actions of other universities in response to demands to rename buildings or remove statuary. These developments heightened the sense of timeliness and national significance of the committee’s deliberations.

The question of whether to remove the name of President Byrd from the Stadium and what other actions might be taken involves people, histories, and policies that are specific to the University of Maryland (UMD). However, it is not ours alone. It is embedded in a larger statewide and national discussion of how to create a more inclusive and more equitable educational system for people of all walks of life.

Introduction
Most accounts of Harry C. Byrd’s long presidency—1935-to 1954—emphasize the strong leadership he provided for the expansion of the University of Maryland at College Park. The documents detail the transformation of the University of Maryland from an undistinguished agricultural college to something resembling a modern university. President Byrd oversaw a major expansion of the university and the campus as a whole grew rapidly, particularly over the course and immediate aftermath of World War II. Student enrollment, thanks in part to the GI Bill, grew from 3,400 to 16,000; the budget increased from approximately $3 million to $20 million; and he oversaw the construction of over 60 buildings, including the Administration Building, Memorial Chapel and Reckord Armory. President Byrd is credited in the official university’s history for dynamic and powerful leadership during this period of significant growth and expansion of the University.

The official narratives, however, have been silent about President Byrd’s role in maintaining racial segregation and systematic exclusion of black students and faculty from the University of Maryland College Park. Through such silences the university’s history has been rendered partial and biased, distorted by erasures that important segments of the state’s citizens and the UMD community, including those who have faced racism and exclusion, find deeply injurious. In recent months, demands to acknowledge such hidden and painful elements in the history of institutions of higher learning have extended well beyond the UMD campus. Universities all over the country are currently facing demands challenging their leaders to better understand the concerns and better protect the rights of underrepresented minorities. Included in these demands
are removals of names from buildings, statuary and other representations of individuals who were advocates and implementers of policies that enforced racial segregation. In a short span of time, determining how to respond to such demands has become a key issue in higher education. In such a context, the university’s response to the removal of President Byrd’s name from the football stadium is likely to receive national attention.

As a result, the UMD campus community has been given both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is to carefully consider arguments for and against removing President Byrd’s name from the stadium, perhaps replacing it with another. Addressing this issue also provides an opportunity to educate the campus and the larger community about the university’s history through restoring what has been erased from it—the ways in which the campus was shaped by systematic exclusion, first by the presence of slavery and then by racial segregation. By openly acknowledging the pervasiveness of racist attitudes and policies, both implicit and explicit that historically excluded black people, the campus can better comprehend the legacy that prevented the creation of a diverse learning environment in higher education, here and elsewhere. Such knowledge and understanding will enhance efforts to promote a positive campus climate in the present, placing the campus in a stronger position to achieve contemporary goals of diversity and inclusion in the future.

**Arguments For Removing the Name of Byrd Stadium**

**Byrd’s deeds and actions** (See Biographical Notes)

1. President Harry C. “Curley” Byrd maintained and actively promoted segregation at the University of Maryland, resisting legal efforts by black people to gain admission into the university, labeling such efforts as the product of outside agitation, and advocating for the establishment of separate educational facilities for different races (such as for Engineering and Sociology). More broadly, in his effort to promote the development of the Princess Anne campus as an alternative for African-Americans, he continued the segregated learning environment at the College Park campus. His writings and speeches justified segregation by drawing on racist stereotypes regarding the potential dangers of integration. Archival documents indicate that Byrd did not restrict his efforts to maintaining segregation at the University of Maryland, College Park, but coordinated with other university presidents across the South to resist challenges to educational segregation.

2. President Byrd’s advocacy of segregation extended beyond his term of office at the University of Maryland. As a candidate for governor of Maryland he endorsed a “separate but equal” platform, and there is no evidence that he ever reconsidered this political position, even through the 1960s. He opposed efforts by the federal government and the courts to challenge practices of segregation; and even on the horrific matter of lynching, he argued that states, rather than the federal government, should have the authority to decide whether or how to penalize its practice.
University Values

3. The symbolic act of removing President Byrd’s name from the stadium would speak to central values of equality. It would continue the University’s work to make the campus a more diverse, inclusive, fair, just, and welcoming place. Moreover, changing the name would be consistent with the efforts of current and recent past leadership to improve campus diversity, such as those outlined in the 2010 strategic plan for diversity, *Transforming Maryland: Expectations for Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion* (http://provost.umd.edu/Documents/Strategic_Plan_for_Diversity.pdf), and with the range of other initiatives designed to promote equality and inclusion based on group membership (such as ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, sex, gender).

4. Removing President Byrd’s name would provide an opportunity, both within the university and for the external public, to show how the University of Maryland at College Park can be bold, innovative and fearless when addressing issues of race in the twenty-first century—what it means to be a Terp today.

5. Removing the name of President Byrd would reflect the aspirational ideals of the University of Maryland; examples of which are found in the engraved words of Frederick Douglass, now inscribed on Frederick Douglass Square. A second example is the actions of Parren J. Mitchell, the first African-American to graduate with a Master’s degree from the University, whose name now emblazons the Parren J. Mitchell Art-Sociology building.

6. For many African-American citizens of the State of Maryland, alumni, faculty, staff and students at the university, President Byrd’s name is associated with a history of exclusion and discrimination. Removing his name would provide a public signal of a sharp break with the University’s segregationist past, indicating a departure from those values that were prevalent when the stadium was built.

University Climate

7. The university is committed to a welcoming and inclusive climate for all its members. However, maintaining the name contributes to a hostile and unwelcoming climate. This is particularly true for African-American community members whose opportunities for higher education in the State of Maryland were specifically restricted by the policies and programs enacted by President Byrd, and also for other members of the community who believe that the values of exclusion do not reflect their own ideals. As the community becomes aware of the past, and specifically the full range of actions of President Byrd regarding racial segregation, changing the name would signal University respect for the values and struggles of fellow citizens, indicating that their presence is welcome, their stories heard, and their contributions valued. Maintaining the name would be viewed as an indicator of continuing racial insensitivity.

8. The current national climate provides a special opportunity for the State and University of Maryland to be a leader on this critical national issue. This leadership could be one that the campus community could celebrate as it has with the dedication of the Frederick Douglass Plaza and the Parren J. Mitchell Art-Sociology Building.
Resources
9. Leadership on this issue offers a way to engage new donors and re-energize alumni, particularly black alumni. It also could aid in the recruitment of faculty, staff and students.

Educational Merit
10. As an educational institution, the University has an obligation to provide as full and complete information on its history as possible, including those aspects of the story that may be anathema to contemporary values. We have an obligation to avoid perpetuating mis-education.

Public Perception/Politics
11. The football stadium is arguably one of the most nationally visible symbols of the University. Changing the name will receive national attention and will be referenced for some time as events are broadcast from the stadium.
12. There could be a gain of political goodwill for the university across the state.

Arguments Against Removing the Name of Byrd Stadium

Byrd’s deeds and actions (See Biographical Notes)
1. Removal of President Byrd’s name could contribute to widespread disregard of Byrd’s positive contributions to the university. Over a period of almost fifty years, President Harry C. “Curley” Byrd served the university as an All-American football player, winning coach, athletic director, high-level administrator and, finally, president. The first football stadium was originally named to honor his athletic feats as player, coach and athletic director in 1923. In 1950, his name was transferred to the new stadium to provide similar recognition for his achievements as president. President Byrd is credited with transforming the University of Maryland at College Park from an undistinguished agricultural college to a national university. These changes have provided a foundation for current growth.

2. For many citizens of the State of Maryland, alumni, faculty, staff and students at the university, President Byrd’s name carries positive connotations and memories. He is remembered as someone who was committed to athletic excellence and institutional growth and was a powerful advocate of the university, raising funds for an extraordinary number of new buildings and programs.

3. President Byrd’s racial views and policies, although unacceptable today, were a product of his time. His views on segregation were characteristic of the Jim Crow era that supported and sustained segregation. Many other leaders during that period had similar views and it is to be expected that he would be in communication with them.
4. The integration of the University of Maryland occurred during Harry C. Byrd’s presidency, and though it was a response to court orders (either enacted or impending), all indications are that it was peaceful and without public protest.

University Values
5. Removing President Byrd’s name is a symbolic gesture that diverts attention, resources and energy away from developing more substantive policies and programs to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for those previously excluded from the campus.
6. Removing President Byrd’s name may be viewed as a facile or “knee-jerk“ response to a complex and growing public issue, done too quickly without sufficient attention to its long-term ramifications. It will remind some of the “Orwellian” policies of transforming history to fit current beliefs.

University Climate
7. Removing President Byrd’s name sets a precedent and begins a process whereby the names of other buildings, monuments, scholarships and programs named for individuals from this same era or those considered to be offensive for a variety of other reasons would also have to be changed, thereby creating a climate of instability.

Resources
8. In removing President Byrd’s name the university risks losing or isolating alumni, donors and political supporters.

Educational Merit
9. Since President Byrd’s time, UMD has been transformed from a segregated university to one of the most diverse universities in the nation in the Civil Rights era. Retaining the Byrd name is reminder of the road travelled and the difficult and challenging process involved. By erasing reminders of President Byrd’s racist ideals and segregationist principles, the university risks diminishing its achievements, and a critical part of the university’s history could be lost.

Public Perception/Politics
10. There could be a loss of political goodwill for the university across the state.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERATIONS AND ACTIONS
The issues raised by the naming of Byrd Stadium present an opportunity to “own” our history. This section of the report presents some alternative considerations and actions that the University may consider in response to the direct and indirect issues raised by the controversy over the naming of Byrd Stadium. The selection of these alternatives benefitted from the Committee’s review of the local, regional and national scene where similar concerns were being raised. Specifically, we considered the actions taken or planned at the following institutions: Brown University, Clemson University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of Virginia, University of Texas at Austin, Yale University, Georgetown University and Princeton
University. It is our considered opinion that many of the alternatives listed here are applicable regardless of whether the decision is made to remove or keep the stadium name. For the sake of clarity, the alternatives are organized into five different categories, but they are by no means mutually exclusive.

**Naming Initiatives**

Possible actions with respect to building names, including the football stadium

- **Revise the existing marker at Byrd Stadium.** Currently there is a plaque behind the student section that provides information about President Byrd, but there is no mention of his segregationist views and policies. A new marker could be installed to give a more accurate representation of his leadership.

- **Add a second name or a hyphenated name to Byrd Stadium** (e.g., the Darrell K. Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium at UT-Austin). This would have the benefit of keeping the historical issue visible for the future.

- **Install new public markers in and around the stadium.** The university could add statuary, plaques, or other markers in and around Byrd Stadium to honor individuals who better represent our commitment to diversity and inclusion. One name that came up as an example was Darryl Hill, the first African-American student-athlete to play football in the ACC.

- **Consider the names of other buildings on campus.** Byrd Stadium is not the only facility at UMD named after someone who took public positions in support of racial inequality or other forms of discrimination. For example, Francis Scott Key was a prominent defender of slavery and a leader of the Maryland Colonization Society, an organization that sought to expatriate free and enslaved Blacks to Africa. The campus might undertake a broader initiative to discuss and debate building names and university values.

- **Make social and historical considerations a formal part of the naming process.** Current policies and procedures used by the university’s Naming Committee do not require consideration of whether an individual’s beliefs and actions are consistent with the university’s commitment to diversity and equality. The university could establish a formal process by which the naming committee and other university officials consider these issues and vet persons for whom buildings might be named.

**Historical Initiatives**

Possible actions to expand and, in some cases, to correct the University’s presentation of its history in public spaces

- **Correct and expand the historical narrative on campus websites, plaques, and other markers.** Currently the University website and other public markers say little to nothing about Maryland’s past as an all-white, male-only institution, and some even give the mistaken impression that President Byrd endorsed integration because it occurred during his administration. The work group feels strongly that regardless of the decision regarding the naming of Byrd Stadium, the historical narrative needs to be corrected and the University should tell more fully and openly the history of racial segregation and other forms of discrimination on the campus. It should also communicate the story of the proud, ongoing struggle to make this a more excellent, diverse, and inclusive institution.

- **Create a permanent exhibit on campus about President Byrd.** In light of his impact on the history of the University of Maryland, a permanent exhibit about President Byrd
could be placed in the McKeldin Library or the Main Administration building. The exhibit would honor his many contributions to the University and would discuss openly his segregationist actions.
- **Add a discussion of the history of diversity and inclusion at the University of Maryland to the campus tour.** So that prospective students and visitors can better understand, appreciate, and support the University of Maryland’s commitment to diversity and inclusion, the Undergraduate Admissions office could add a tour stop that gives a brief and honest overview of the history of exclusion and inclusion on the College Park campus, including the story of President Byrd’s opposition to integration. One possibility is to share this information with visitors at the new Frederick Douglass Square.

**Academic Initiatives**
Possible actions related to teaching and research
- **Foster a dialogue about President Byrd and the broader story of segregation and integration through forums, symposia, etc.** The work group received public input during its deliberations, but the short timetable did not allow us to hold a campus-wide conversation about the decision to remove or keep the current stadium name. President Loh might organize campus-wide events and avenues for discussion with students, staff, faculty and alumni.
- **Incorporate the story into the General Education curriculum.** In 2009, Professor Ira Berlin taught a course that investigated the relationship between slavery and the history of the University of Maryland. This course or others like it might be made a permanent part of the undergraduate curriculum.
- **Create a permanent and campus-wide educational program related to civil rights and the history of diversity and inclusion at the University.** The programming could include such things as a named lecture series, symposia, etc. The programming might be coordinated with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion’s “Rise Above” campaign.
- **Select a First Year Book that addresses issues of racial exclusion and inclusion.** The tradition of the First Year Book gives the University community an opportunity to have a shared conversation about issues relevant across campus. This book for 2016-17 might be one that speaks to the issues of racial exclusion and inclusion embedded in the stadium naming debate.
- **Create a research center.** To maintain a dialogue about the struggle for social justice at College Park and broader issues of injustice and equality, the University might create a center. One model is the Center of Slavery & Justice at Brown University ([http://www.brown.edu/initiatives/slavery-and-justice/](http://www.brown.edu/initiatives/slavery-and-justice/)).

**Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives**
Possible actions to create or build on existing campus-wide initiatives that advance diversity and inclusion
- **Increase funding and efforts for the recruitment and retention of underrepresented minority faculty and staff.** In recent decades the university has made progress in diversifying the faculty and staff, but more work remains.
- **Create, prioritize, and reward professional development opportunities related to diversity and inclusion.** Excellence through diversity is a shared value on campus, but too often the work of advancing this ideal falls on faculty from marginalized groups or on
individuals with jobs directly related to this mission. Programs should be developed that prepare every faculty member to become skilled at teaching and mentoring diverse populations, and fostering a climate where students from all groups feel included. These activities should be encouraged and rewarded.

- **Expand campus support for ADVANCE Programs initiatives that promote faculty diversity and inclusion.**

- **Expand resources for recruiting and retaining underrepresented minority students.** The recession and its aftermath have hit minority students especially hard and amplified the legacies of segregation and discrimination at UMD. The campus discussion around the naming of Byrd Stadium is an opportunity to commit more financial and institutional resources to initiatives to help minority students succeed, including at the graduate level where underrepresentation is especially dramatic.

- **Provide more financial and institutional resources to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.** The demand to improve our actions and programs in a manner consistent with our values requires increased investment in the offices necessary to reach these goals.

- **Create better coordination and communication among Presidential Commissions giving them greater voice in campus-wide diversity and inclusion initiatives.** The campus currently has several Presidential Commissions related to diversity and inclusion, including the Commission on Women; the Commission for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues; the Commission on Ethnic and Minority Issues; and the Commission on Disability Issues. These Commissions are doing important work, and their impact could be amplified if there was increased coordination between them and direct involvement in decision-making and shared governance on campus.

- **Expand the use of and campus support for the Words of Engagement Intergroup Dialogue Program.** Making diversity work well is a long-term challenge and this program has been very successful in contributing to doing so.

The legacy of Jim Crow segregation in Maryland higher education continues to affect contemporary policy and programming and impacts not only the campus but also the entire state. As a land grant institution and the flagship campus of the University System of Maryland, UMD’s decisions and actions on matters of diversity, inclusion and racial reconciliation can provide leadership that facilitates educational equity and advances democratic values. We would hope to see the University systematically assess the impact of its actions on diversity, inclusion and economic justice and use its leverage to promote those values on the campus, in the surrounding community (e.g., the Greater College Park initiative) and across the state.

Respectfully Submitted,

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