



## Policy on Commemorative Tributes

### No. 12005

**Policy Effective Date:**  
5/16/1969

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**Policy Owner:**  
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**Affected Parties:**  
Faculty  
Staff

- 1.0 Purpose
- 2.0 Policy
- 3.0 Procedures
- 4.0 Definitions
- 5.0 References
- 6.0 Approval and Revisions

### 1.0 Purpose

The following policy and procedures apply to the commemorative naming of physical spaces and/or other entities the University Commemorative Tributes Committee will take under consideration, such as buildings, portions of buildings, streets or other physical facilities, land spaces, and to the erection and plan for donor recognition walls or hanging of plaques, portraits or other permanent memorials honoring individuals or organizations on the campus or outlying properties of the university, as well as specific academic units, such as departments, schools, colleges, institutes, or centers that may be named in honor of individuals.

### 2.0 Policy

The university will approve commemorative namings of buildings, physical facilities, specific academic components, external areas and land spaces such as gardens, lawns and plazas, and the erection of plaques, signs, and portraits as a commemorative tribute in appropriate instances where the university has significantly benefited from the relationship with the person or organization and such naming brings no adverse reflection on the university. The process for securing a naming opportunity is as follows:

1. The University Commemorative Tributes Committee is responsible for reviewing proposals for the naming, renaming, or removal of names of buildings, other physical facilities, centers, institutes, etc., and for making recommendations to the president.
2. After review, the president will submit his/her selected proposals for commemorative tributes to the Board of Visitors.
3. The Board of Visitors will act on those proposals recommended by the president. Final approval rests with the Board of Visitors. In rare situations in which there is an exceptional time sensitivity, the Board delegates to the President, after consultation with the Rector, the authority to approve a naming proposal, contingent upon ratification by the full Board of Visitors at its next meeting.
4. The Board of Visitors authorizes the President, upon the recommendation of the Commemorative Tributes Committee, to approve the erection of plaques, permanent signs and other memorials (such as bricks and benches), and the commissioning and hanging of portraits related to the naming.
5. This policy applies only to the naming of facilities and physical spaces in honor of persons or organizations and does not apply to the identification of rooms or facilities with numbers, letters, colors, or generic terms.



## 2.1 Commemorative Tributes Committee

The Commemorative Tributes Committee will consist of the following:

1. Senior Vice President for Advancement, Chair
2. Executive Vice President and Provost
3. Executive Vice President and Chief Business Officer
4. Vice President for Student Affairs
5. Vice President for Finance
6. Vice President for Strategic Affairs and Diversity\*
7. President of the Faculty Senate (or designee)
8. President of the Undergraduate Student Senate (or designee)
9. Chief Executive Officer of the Virginia Tech Foundation, Inc.

(As the university's organizational structure evolves, the President is authorized by the Board of Visitors to adjust the titles of the committee's membership to reflect those organizational changes.)

\* In the event that the role of Vice President for Strategic Affairs and Diversity is no longer held by one person and divided into two individual holders of the aforementioned positions, then the committee membership would be realigned to the senior administration role designated for the leadership of Inclusion and Diversity.

## 2.2 Policy for All Commemorative Tributes

1. Consideration should be given to the desirability of an appropriate relationship between the use of the physical facility and the person or organization for which the facility is named.
2. In reviewing proposals for names of buildings or other facilities, it is appropriate for the members of the Commemorative Tributes Committee to contact appropriate members of the university community to obtain and/or validate information.
3. Any building or other facility bearing the name of a person or organization should be clearly identifiable, distinctive, significant, enduring, and functional and should reflect honor on the person or organization for which it is named. Portions of buildings or rooms within buildings generally should meet these same criteria. In addition, names assigned to portions of buildings or rooms should be helpful to users in identification of the facilities.
4. External spaces, such as gardens, plazas, and lawns will go through the same review process as physical spaces.
  - a. The steps to officially name a land space adjacent to an existing building in honor of an individual will require the same process as physical space namings. Further, a land-adjacent space will not assume the naming convention of the building physically situated next to the land.
5. This policy applies only to the naming of facilities in honor of persons or organizations and does not apply to the identification of rooms or facilities with numbers, letters, colors, or generic terms.
6. Buildings, physical facilities or major academic units are not named for individuals who have been employed by the university during the year preceding the naming. Exceptions may be granted in extraordinary cases.



## Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

- a. In cases where the individual being honored may still be employed by the university but has been separated from the role for which his/her contributions have been most substantial for at least one year, the individual would qualify for an honorific naming.
7. Named structures and spaces will exist as long as a building is standing, or unless a major renovation occurs that will result in changes to the space. Circumstances will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis in circumstances where structures or spaces are removed or changed.

### 2.3 Policy for Names in Tribute of Corporate Entities

1. Corporate names are considered to be appropriate for naming of internal spaces and designated exterior locations (i.e., courtyards, gardens, athletic fields). Such naming opportunities must be stated in the proposal, as part of the negotiation, prior to consideration by the Commemorative Tributes Committee.
2. Corporate names are not considered to be appropriate for the external identification of buildings.
3. Naming privileges are to be negotiated for a period of up to ten years.
4. The naming privilege may be granted at the receipt of the pledge commitment and its first payment.
5. Exceptions may be granted in extraordinary situations.

### 2.4 Policy for Building Names in Tribute to Individuals

The following guidelines should be observed in naming buildings or portions of buildings:

1. Entire buildings, building additions, or portions of buildings may be named in honor of an individual or individuals.
2. The naming of a building, part of a building, or other facility or property of the university is a high honor and would not be done casually. The honor is reserved for those who have made extraordinary contributions to the University through their achievements in service and/or in financial support to the university.
3. To merit recognition in the naming of a building or portion of a building, an individual's relationship to the university should be truly exceptional in both quality and impact and be of significant duration.
  - a. Honorary naming of buildings, exclusive of philanthropic contributions, is generally reserved for university presidents.
4. When financial contributions are a factor, the level of contribution needed to name a building, addition to a building, or portion of a building (as may be the case in a major renovation project) will vary depending on the financing considerations, purpose, size, prominence on campus, and the level of private support needed for construction. Such gift commitments must be payable over a defined pledge term and the donor must provide a legally binding commitment enforceable against his/her assets/estate until the pledge is retired.
5. Prior to initiating the formal naming process, at least 75% of the gift commitment for the established naming opportunity must be received by the Virginia Tech Foundation, Inc. for any new construction or major renovation. When the naming opportunity is for an existing space with no associated debt service, it is recommended that at least 50% of the specified gift commitment be received before the naming process commences. Exceptions may be granted in extraordinary situations.
  - a. In cases of existing construction, outright gifts and/or irrevocable deferred gifts, e.g., life income plans, may be used. The amount credited toward the naming opportunity will be based on the present value of the charitable gift plan.



## Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

- b. In cases of new construction and when financial support is needed for construction, only outright gifts of readily marketable assets may be used.
  - c. The required gift level for naming spaces within buildings, such as auditoriums, classrooms, laboratories, etc., will be established following the same principles as to naming of existing major facilities.
6. Building names should reflect honor on the university as well as on the person or persons being honored and are considered to be permanent. When extraordinary circumstances arise where the removal or changing of a building name or individual named space may be warranted, those circumstances will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis in accordance with University Policy 12005, Section 2.4a.

### **2.4a Guidelines for Changing or Removing Names in Tribute to Individuals**

1. For cases in which a review of a named building or space is warranted, the Commemorative Tributes Committee will receive and consider proposals for removal or changing of a name from members of the university community, including councils, commissions, authorized boards, and individuals with a verified and appropriate relationship with the university. Proposals to be considered must include justification, research, and ample information from which an informed and appropriate recommendation can be made.
2. The extraordinary circumstances that would warrant a review and potential recommendation for the removal or change of a named building or space include but would not be limited to:
  - a. The building no longer exists. In this case, it is recommended that a commemorative plaque honoring the individual for which the former structure was named be placed within any new structure erected on the site of the former structure.
  - b. The individual for which the building or space was named has been found to not represent the values of the university through the discovery of information that dishonors the university and/or the individual.
  - c. Failure of the donor to fulfill the philanthropic commitment required and relied upon for the specific naming opportunity in the official agreement in place at the time of the approved building or space naming.
  - d. Request of the individual/donor/associated family member to remove or change the building or space name if the purpose and use of the space no longer aligns with the stated intentions at the time the naming was confirmed.
3. Notification of name changes will be public and transparent, in consultation with the office of communications and marketing for an appropriate communications plan.

### **2.5 Plaques and Portraits, and Miscellaneous Items of Recognition**

1. Donor walls, plaques, portraits, and miscellaneous items (bricks, benches, etc.) should be encouraged to commemorate truly outstanding contributions, either in service or financial support, of persons or organizations.
2. Such tributes should be located inside or outside buildings or facilities that have strong identification with the persons or organizations being honored.
3. The cost of such plaques, portraits, and miscellaneous recognition items generally should be borne by donors interested in the tributes.



4. All internal and external designs need to be reviewed and approved by the Office of University Planning in accordance with university signage standards and design guidelines to assure compliance with the university's master plan.

## 2.6 Departments, Schools, Colleges, Institutes, Centers, or Other Academic Units

1. A major academic unit may be named in honor of an individual in recognition of service to the university and/or in recognition of financial contributions sufficient to provide physical facilities and equipment for its academic and/or research programs, or which would provide sufficient income to cover an appropriate portion of the annual operating costs of the unit, or both.
2. The name applied to an academic unit should be appropriate to its purpose, and should reflect honor on the university as well as upon the person for which it is named.
3. Because the life of a university center or institute is not expected to continue indefinitely, gift funding for an institute or a center may be accomplished by endowment or current gifts. If accomplished by a current gift, the name of the institute or center shall generally be limited to the term during which the expendable gift provides funding. The policies and procedures for naming the center or institute shall be the same as for naming other major academic units of the university.

## 3.0 Procedures

## 4.0 Definitions

## 5.0 References

Policy 5410, Official Building and Facility Names, Designations and Numbers  
<http://www.policies.vt.edu/5410.pdf>

## 6.0 Approval and Revisions

Approved by the Board of Visitors on May 16, 1969 – Policy for Commemorative Tributes.

- Revision 1 - To update policy into standard policy format for inclusion in the University policies.  
Approved May 2, 1980 by the Board of Visitors.
- Revision 2 - Section 2.1 updated to include title changes of existing members and add additional vice presidents to the committee.  
Approved October 15, 1992 by the President, Dr. James McComas.  
Approved February 27, 2001 by the Vice President for Development and University Relations, Elizabeth A. Flanagan.

Administrative updates approved on October 31, 2001 by the President, Dr. Charles Steger.

- Revision 3 – Full revision.  
Approved August 25, 2003 by the Board of Visitors.



## Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

- **Revision 4**  
April 1, 2008: Updates to position titles and/or responsibilities due to university reorganization.
- **Revision 5**  
The current university organization, additional procedural considerations giving context and definition to specific naming and funding options, and clarification of naming eligibility necessitates a full policy revision. This major revision updates the committee composition, modifies the 12-month separation rule to factor in eligibility based on the vacated role, incorporates the permanency of namings and the need to individually evaluate spaces that may move or cease to exist, defines the minimum criteria of philanthropic commitments that must be received from corporations and individuals before namings can be formally applied, and specifies the requirement that all identifying signage must be created in consultation with the Office of University Planning.  
Approved June 6, 2016 by the Board of Visitors.
- **Revision 6**  
The position of Vice Provost for Inclusion and Diversity was added to the membership of the Commemorative Tributes Committee, Section 2.1.  
Approved September 11, 2017 by the Board of Visitors.  
Approved September 11, 2017 by the President, Dr. Timothy D. Sands
- **Revision 7**  
The title of the position of Vice Provost for Inclusion and Diversity was updated to Vice President for Strategic Affairs and Vice Provost for Inclusion and Diversity (Section 2.1).
  - The Senior Vice President for Administration and Operations was added to the Committee membership (Section 2.1).
  - New guidance was added relating to the gift commitment when the naming opportunity is for existing space with no associated debt service (Section 2.4, paragraph 5).
  - In rare circumstances in which there is an exceptional time sensitivity, authority was delegated to the President, after consultation with the Rector, to approve a naming proposal, contingent upon ratification by the full Board of Visitors at its next meeting (Section 2.0, paragraph 3).Approved November 5, 2018, by the Board of Visitors.  
Approved by the Vice President for Advancement, Charles Phlegar on November 5, 2018.
- **Revision 8**
  - Incorporated references to non-physical, external land spaces to include gardens, lawns and plazas (Sections 1.0, 2.0, and 2.2, paragraph.4).
  - Added language to reflect the function of the committee to review proposals to rename or remove names, in addition to approve naming proposals. (Section 2.0, paragraph 1).
  - Updated process for naming external, land-adjacent spaces to named buildings. (Section 2.2, paragraph 4a).
  - Expanded definition of qualification for namings of former or current employees in accordance with the 12-month separation rule. (2.2, paragraph 6a).
  - Clarified that honorary building namings are generally reserved for university presidents. (Section 2.4, paragraph 3a).



## Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

- Added exception clause for circumstances in which names that are considered permanent may be changed or removed from a building or individual named space. (Section 2.4, paragraph 6a).
- Added Section 2.4a with guidelines for removing names in tribute to individuals.

Approved June 8, 2021, by the Board of Visitors.

Approved by the Vice President for Advancement, Charles Phlegar on June 8, 2021.

- Revision 9

Updated administrative/departmental titles in Sections 2.1 and 2.4a.

Approved by the Vice President for Policy and Governance, Kim O'Rourke on June 12, 2023.