

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Ravi V. Bellamkonda, President

FROM: Standing Advisory Committee for the Review of University Space and Entity Names

DATE: July 23, 2026

RE: Naming Review Request/Thompson Library

Introduction

This memorandum provides the final recommendation from the Standing Advisory Committee for the Review of University Space and Entity Names (“Committee”) concerning a request to review the name of the Thompson Library. A group of four alumni requested a name change in 2022 based on claims that former University President William Oxley Thompson took a “leadership role, as a member of the Columbus City Schools (“CCS”) Board of Education, in establishing de facto racially segregated schools in Columbus, starting in 1909 and lasting until 1977, and ... [maintained] racially segregated student housing at The Ohio State University during his tenure as president.”

Following the university’s Procedure for Reviewing Names of University Spaces and Entities (“Procedure”) established by the Board of Trustees (“Board”), the Committee concluded in 2023—based solely on the information provided by the requestors—that a full review was appropriate. From there, the Procedure required the Committee to conduct its own research to determine whether a name change was warranted based on the allegations, looking beyond just the materials provided by the requestors to locate and analyze any potentially relevant information. This review took significant time to complete and required extensive historical research given that the allegations concern conduct from the early 1900s that is largely not memorialized in university-maintained records.

Based on this thorough review, the Committee does not recommend changing the name of the Thompson Library or taking any alternative actions regarding the naming of that space. As discussed more fully below, the requestors are correct that CCS was de facto segregated for a significant period of time despite the fact that Ohio law prohibited segregation as a matter of law, and that this practice can be traced to the opening of the Champion Avenue School, which occurred during Dr. Thompson’s time on that Board. Such segregation was clearly improper and immoral. However, the fuller historical record does not sufficiently substantiate the requestors’ views that Dr. Thompson specifically led efforts to establish racially segregated CCS schools, and the Committee could not find any evidence that Dr. Thompson promoted racially segregated student housing at the university. Further, while the CCS records lend some limited insight into

Thompson's individual views on these issues, additional contemporaneous records, including both personal correspondence and public remarks, reveal that he was engaged thoughtfully on issues of race and civil rights in the face of an evolving state and national dialogue. Viewing these factors in their historical context and weighing them against the broader evaluative factors that the Committee must consider under the Procedure, the record does not meet the high standard for removal of Dr. Thompson's name from a university space.

This memorandum: (1) explains the review process as set forth in the Procedure; (2) outlines the request, the evidence submitted in support of it, and the Committee's initial reasoning in recommending a full review; (3) discusses the Committee's approach to identifying and locating relevant evidence; (4) outlines the evidence identified and considered by the Committee; and (5) provides the Committee's final analysis and recommendation.

Review process

The Procedure establishes a rigorous review process for requests to remove names from university spaces and entities. Any current university faculty, staff, or student or any alumnus may make a request, and requestors must "provide substantial evidence of misconduct or other inappropriate behavior by the individual or entity at issue and demonstrate that that conduct or behavior is harmful to Ohio State's reputation for excellence and its values of integrity and inclusiveness." Only reasons set forth by requestors will be considered at each stage of the process, and requestors bear the burden of providing full, accurate and convincing information as to why the name should be removed in submitting their request. Requestors must also provide thorough documentation for their sources and demonstrate that those sources are reliable.

Further, requestors must answer additional questions in support of their requests, specifically:

- Why was the building named after this person? Was the name honorific or in recognition of a philanthropic gift (donation)? If it was honorific, briefly describe the honoree's significant contributions to Ohio State.
- Why is the legacy of the namesake fundamentally at odds with the principles guiding the campus today? That is, explain why the legacy's pernicious effects outweigh the individual's contributions. What substantial evidence is there to support this claim?
- What is the likely impact on members of the university community if the name is retained and/or removed?
- What other relevant information or arguments should be considered?

Once a request is made and the Committee chair determines that it includes all required criteria, it is subject to an up-to-five-step review process:

- **Initial Committee Review.** The Committee reviews the request to determine whether it provides substantial evidence to merit further consideration. The Committee must ultimately issue a recommendation to the Provost as to whether a full review should occur, and if so on what grounds. At this step, the Committee may only rely on evidence submitted by the requestors.
- **Provost Review.** The Provost reviews the recommendation to determine whether and to what extent to advance the request for further review or deny it such that no further action is taken.

- **Committee Investigation.** If the request is advanced, the Committee conducts a thorough review to determine whether the name at issue should be removed, some other action should be taken, or no action should be taken, and issues a recommendation to the President. At this step, the Committee may review any evidence that it deems appropriate, regardless of whether it was provided by the requestors, to provide a more fulsome conclusion as to the appropriateness of a name removal. However, the Committee may only consider the grounds for removal that the requestors identify and that the Provost approves for review.
- **President Review and Decision.** The President reviews the recommendation in consultation with the Provost and other officials as appropriate, and determines whether to remove the name, take another action, or take no action. The President's decision is final, except that the Board must review and approve name removals or modifications.
- **Board Decision.** The Board has the final decisional authority as to whether to remove or modify a name.

As noted above, this memorandum sets forth the Committee's final recommendation, and the Procedure requires the Committee to weigh several issues at that step. First, the Committee may find a request to remove a name more compelling when there is substantial evidence that:

- The namesake was found to have committed a serious violation of a state or U.S. law prior to or during that individual's lifetime following the naming recognition.
- The repugnant conduct in question was central to the namesake's career, public persona or life as a whole.
- Allegations of repugnant behavior are supported by documentary evidence that demonstrates both the extent and the intentionality of the namesake's actions.
- Honoring the namesake demonstrably jeopardizes the university's integrity and materially impedes its mission of teaching, research and public engagement; 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 public.

By contrast, the Committee may conclude that a request is less compelling when there is not substantial evidence of the above factors, or where:

- 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 toward greater inclusion, service, or reparations for prior injustices.

Ultimately, to recommend a name change, the Committee must find substantial evidence that the individual or entity's name is fundamentally at odds with and harmful to the university's reputation for excellence and its values of integrity and inclusiveness, and that at least two of the following factors are met—that the name:

- Creates or reinforces stereotypes of individuals or groups based on race, gender, ethnicity and other identities considered protected under law;
- Promotes professional practices, policies, and scholarship that have now been debunked as fraudulent or unethical;
- Supports action or inaction that perpetuates inequity either in the namesake's own era or in the current time; and/or
- Has a significant and demonstrably harmful impact on the university's reputation in another way.

If these factors are not met and/or if the Committee does not believe that a name change should be made but nonetheless believes that additional action should be taken to provide greater context, the Committee may recommend alternative actions, including but not limited to:

- Installing new/revised information on plaques or other memorial items to provide a fuller account of the actions and legacies of the honoree;
- Installing new plaques, statuary, or other memorial items alongside the existing named object/edifice to honor individuals who better represent our commitment to diversity and inclusion;
- Expanding (and, where necessary, correcting) the historical narrative on campus websites, plaques and other markers; and/or
- Creating a permanent exhibit on campus that gives fuller account of an honoree's actions and legacies and encourages open and contextualized discussions.

Importantly, and as outlined in the Procedure, “[n]ames of spaces and entities are not and should not be changed lightly,” and individuals who request a change to such names “must make a compelling case for the name removal or amendment.”

Thompson Library requests and initial review

The Committee's January 2023 memorandum to the Provost recommending a full review (which is attached hereto) outlines the requests in extensive detail, but in brief four alumni submitted requests regarding the Thompson Library name in 2022: (1) Carol Brown Dodson (M.A., 1970); (2) Dr. Linda Fenner (Ph.D., 1995); (3) Dr. Margaret Bledsoe Kasten (Ph.D., 1981); (4) Dr. Mark Stewart (M.A., 1973; Ph.D., 1980). Because the requestors were working collaboratively and raised similar requests, the Committee consolidated them for review.

In making their requests, the requestors noted that Dr. Thompson was a pivotal figure in the university's history during his long tenure as president (from 1899 to 1925), a period of significant institutional growth in which he led the university to state and national prominence. They recognized that Dr. Thompson was an outspoken advocate for higher education and the liberal arts more broadly, and among other things developed plans that resulted in the creation of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) and the building of Ohio Stadium. They agreed that these and other accomplishments “had an undeniable positive impact on The Ohio State University.” Unrelatedly, but importantly for the purposes of this request, Dr. Thompson also served on the CCS Board of Education from 1905 to 1914 and was the Board's President in 1910.

While acknowledging the above, the requestors ultimately sought the removal of Dr. Thompson's name from the library given his alleged "leadership role, as a member of the Columbus City Schools Board of Education, in establishing de facto racially segregated schools in Columbus, starting in 1909 and lasting until 1977," and "maintenance of racially segregated student housing at The Ohio State University during his tenure as president." They claimed that these actions had significant negative impacts that outweighed Dr. Thompson's contributions to the university, and that they ran contrary to the university's fundamental values.

The requestors primarily focused on Dr. Thompson's activities with the CCS Board, claiming that CCS segregation began in earnest in 1909 (when Dr. Thompson was on the Board) with the decision to build the Champion Avenue School—a school built in a predominantly African-American residential area and staffed with all African-American teachers. The requestors further noted that CCS remained segregated in practice well after Dr. Thompson left the Board and after the United States Supreme Court's seminal decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), continuing in effect until 1977, when former Judge Robert Duncan of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Ohio issued the landmark decision *Penick v. Columbus Bd. of Edn.*, 429 F. Supp. 229 (S.D. Ohio 1977), which declared the practice unlawful. They explained that this long-running segregation had significant negative impacts on the students and families affected and the community more broadly.

Under the Procedure, though, the requestors must specifically identify misconduct by Dr. Thompson to support a request to remove his name from a university space. The *Penick* decision contains only one limited reference to Dr. Thompson—noting that he informed the CCS Board in 1913 that a legal challenge to the school's construction based on claims of improper segregation had failed, *id.* at 235—and the requestors did not provide any primary sources demonstrating specific misconduct by Dr. Thompson.

However, the requestors provided numerous secondary sources that are detailed more fully in the Committee's 2023 report to the Provost. As discussed in that report, those sources examined various aspects of Thompson's perspectives on race and the history of the Champion Avenue School more broadly, as well as a newspaper article providing contemporaneous reporting of the development of the school, related protests, and a statement by Thompson at the time that "[i]t is in the best interests of both [races] that they be educated in separate schools." They also provided a secondary source alleging that there was a "longstanding practice of denying on-campus housing to African-American students" into the 1940s and 1950s that they alleged Dr. Thompson played a role in to some unspecified extent.

Under the Procedure, the Committee could only rely on the information provided by the requestors in deciding whether to recommend further review of additional materials to the Provost. Based on that documentation, the Committee ultimately concluded that further review was appropriate.

In outlining its reasoning, the Committee noted as follows in material part:

Initially, Committee members universally agreed that segregation is morally wrong, contrary to the university's values, and unlawful. The Committee's charge, though, is not to advise on whether segregation is wrong, but rather to determine

whether the requestors provided sufficient information to warrant a deeper investigation into whether Dr. Thompson's actions warrant removing his name from the library. ...

It is undisputed that Dr. Thompson served in prominent leadership roles at both the University and on the board of the Columbus City Schools, and that in these roles he would have had the ability to make decisions that impacted both institutions on these issues. Further, the specific evidence regarding historical segregation in Columbus City Schools is clear, and documented extensively in the *Penick* decision. However, the evidence submitted by the requestors does not clearly identify what specific roles Dr. Thompson played relative to the allegations made, or what his intentions or motivations for taking any such actions were beyond his positions of leadership in the organizations.

...

Ultimately, the Procedure makes it clear that any decisions on naming issues must be viewed on a true balance of the positive contributions to the University against the deleterious effects of substantial misconduct. And, the Committee concluded that, given the historical prominence and concern over this issue, obtaining clear and complete information and making a fully informed judgment will best serve the University community and avoid the reputational harms that may come with speculation and theorization from an incomplete record. As such, the Committee recommends that further review occur in accordance with the Procedure.

As noted above, though, one word of caution is important. This recommendation is not, and should not be viewed as, a conclusion on the ultimate merit of the allegations made by the requestors. The Committee was adamant that, while it believes that there is substantial evidence sufficient to justify further review, the evidence is too equivocal and incomplete at this point to support any reliable conclusion as to whether a name change is appropriate.

The Committee made this recommendation to former Executive Vice President and Provost Melissa Gilliam in January 2023, and she concurred with it. The Committee's full review began in earnest in February 2023.

Methodology

Given the nature of the allegations and the largely secondary-source information provided by the requestors, the Committee agreed that it was important to search for primary sources wherever possible. Further, because the Procedure requires the Committee to review the allegations and the character of the individual at issue holistically, the Committee determined that it needed to seek out information regarding Dr. Thompson's actions and career more fully. Importantly, though, the events at issue in this request occurred over a century ago, and while the university maintains significant information in its archives concerning Dr. Thompson, most of the documents relevant

to these specific allegations—including things like CCS Board of Education meeting records and reports—were not held or maintained by the university.

To better locate, review, and place these documents in their proper historical context, the Committee requested and received significant research assistance through the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA). Beginning in spring 2023, OAA worked with the College of Arts and Sciences and to assign an associated faculty member from the Department of History to conduct research concerning Dr. Thompson from a variety of sources in close consultation with the Committee, which provided specific direction concerning the types of records to be sought and specific subjects of interest. This faculty member was not part of the Committee, and the Committee did not share detailed information about the request or the Committee’s deliberations on those issues to avoid potential bias in the research efforts. Further, the faculty member was not consulted in the Committee’s final deliberations or as part of the writing of this report; rather, their sole role was to locate and provide information to the Committee to support its review. However, this individual’s diligent and thoughtful efforts were invaluable to the Committee in working through these issues.

The Committee recognizes that this process took an extensive amount of time, but the time was due to the seriousness with which the Committee took its charge and the challenges in locating and reviewing relevant documents. The university archives collection on Dr. Thompson alone contains thousands of documents that were evaluated and considered, along with research into other sources such as the Miami (Ohio) University archives and the Ohio History Connection (formerly known as the Ohio Historical Society). One of the most significant challenges the Committee faced was obtaining records from CCS from the time period at issue, but the Committee felt that these were critical to its ultimate analysis given the nature of the allegations. Thanks to the faculty researcher’s incredibly thorough work, the Committee ultimately received thousands of pages of CCS meeting minutes (many of them handwritten) from the relevant period along with numerous other CCS documents. Nonetheless, the Committee worked diligently to review evidence as it became available, including evidence related to Dr. Thompson’s early life, his career as president of both Miami University and Ohio State, his time on the CCS Board, his career after Ohio State, his personal papers, and more. All told, the Committee collected and reviewed several thousands of pages of documentation and met to discuss the evidence regularly.

Evidence gathered

As noted above, the Committee focused its holistic review on the concerns raised in the allegations and approved for review by the Provost in completing the analysis set forth in the Procedure. This section discusses relevant information gathered from the evidence that the Committee obtained and provides a broader context for these issues more fully, but does not discuss every fact or source considered in detail given the extensive amount of information reviewed. In the interest of clarity and transparency, this report includes an Appendix that outlines the full breadth of sources evaluated and considered by the Committee throughout its review process. However, even then certain sources are listed in aggregate for efficiency purposes. For example, the university archives contain thousands of pages of correspondence and related materials from Dr. Thompson, and it would be impractical to list them all individually; in those instances, the Appendix lists materials identified by category as maintained in the archives.

The requestors raised concerns both about segregation in CCS buildings and OSU housing as well as broader issues around potential racism/improper treatment of individuals based on race. Because the Procedure requires the Committee to evaluate those concerns in their full context, the Committee looked for specific information on those events, Dr. Thompson's perspectives and actions on issues of race and education more broadly, and additional biographical and historical information so as to fully evaluate the allegations. Further, because the Committee's initial report summarized the documents provided by the requestors, those documents are not summarized again here, but were considered as part of this review, and that report is likewise attached.

A. Personal background and career

Dr. Thompson was born in 1855 near Cambridge, Ohio. He received BA and MA degrees from Muskingum College in 1878 and 1881 respectively, and then graduated from the Western Theological Seminary in 1882. Dr. Thompson became the first President of the Longmont Presbyterian College in 1885, then obtained his PhD in Divinity in 1891 and became President of Miami (Ohio) University the same year. In 1899, Dr. Thompson was named the fifth president of Ohio State and served in that role until 1924. As noted above, during Dr. Thompson's 25-year tenure, Ohio State grew significantly into the state's flagship institution, and throughout his entire career he was an outspoken advocate for higher education and its value to society broadly.

In his inaugural address at Miami, Dr. Thompson discussed the importance of higher education designed to meet the needs of "the great middle class": "The need of our times will continue to be the wider diffusion of higher education. That is to say, we shall need the college that shall be content to remain a college; that shall come to the door of the great public with the proposition that no worthy young man or woman need fail of an education." Inauguration of William O. Thompson, D.D., as President of Miami University, p. 35 (Miami University Press 1891).

Dr. Thompson maintained a deep and abiding belief in the power and importance of education over the course of his career. Thirty years after the speech referenced above, he wrote a full-throated defense of the role college graduates play in American society. He referenced education as "the one chief occupation in which all engage and upon which so many of our hopes are resting," and encouraged college graduates to be moral citizen-leaders who strengthen civil society by promoting tolerance and rejecting bigotry:

It is to such as you the country must turn for a citizenship that is tolerant but not indifferent; loyal but not bigoted; aggressive but not conceited; alert but not alarmed. To you we shall continue to look for citizens who are lovers of the truth and of freedom; who will give their lives if need be, for the perpetuity of free institutions. It is in such a citizenship that governments find their strength and institutions of learning their justification.

William Oxley Thompson, *The College Graduate in Modern Life*, Indiana University Alumni Quarterly, Vol. VIII, No. 3, pp. 269, 285 (July 1921).

During Dr. Thompson's tenure at Ohio State, the university grew rapidly and developed into the flagship institution it is today. Further, he led numerous new initiatives and oversaw significant progress that continues to impact the university, including but not limited to the addition of the Colleges of Medicine, Education, and Business; establishing research partnerships with the government, especially in critical areas such as chemistry and aviation during World War I, the construction of Ohio Stadium; creating the Ohio Plan, which became the basis for the National Reserve Officers Training Program (ROTC); and the passing of the Eagleson Bill of 1906, which established Ohio State as the state's designated research university. Additionally, during World War I, Dr. Thompson served as the chair of the Agricultural Commission for the United States Department of Agriculture, was appointed by President Woodrow Wilson to settle a coal strike, and was active on behalf of the League of Nations.

In 1951, the university's Main Library expanded and was officially named the William Oxley Thompson Memorial Library in Dr. Thompson's honor. The Ohio State University Monthly magazine discussed the naming in its May 1951 issue by noting that "it will be named for a man that generations of Ohio Staters revere for his 26-year service as President, William Oxley Thompson." *Id.* at p. 15.

B. CCS Board/Champion Avenue School establishment

The above provides helpful context regarding Dr. Thompson's life and career, but the primary focus of the request concerned Dr. Thompson's alleged leadership role in the CCS Board's action to establish the Champion Avenue school, which was alleged to be a de facto segregated school, and the ensuing impact from such actions. Since the requestors provided largely secondary sources, the Committee sought to find the direct historical records on this matter to fully analyze the situation, which occurred primarily in the late 1800s/early 1900s (both before, during, and after Dr. Thompson's time on the Board from 1905 to 1914). One note is appropriate for this review—several of the historical documents that the Committee obtained included language that is currently considered offensive or harmful. While the Committee believes that these documents must be quoted to provide the proper context for its analysis and conclusions, it is not endorsing that language in doing so.

Initially, it is important to frame the historical era to understand these issues more fully. While the Supreme Court did not prohibit segregated schools nationwide until the landmark United States Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, the Supreme Court of Ohio ruled that segregation was not permitted in Ohio schools in 1888. See *Board of Education v. State ex rel. Gibson*, 45 Ohio St. 555 (1888). As such, Ohio students had to be assigned to attend schools based on where they lived rather than by their race during the period material to this review.

But while Ohio was a leader in outlawing segregation as a matter of law, the national discussion was still very much evolving. Indeed, in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896), the United States Supreme Court upheld the idea of "separate but equal" segregation, and national, state, and local leaders had different views about how best to address these issues, including two of the most prominent national civil rights voices in the African-American community at the time, educator Booker T. Washington and sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois.

In his famous Atlanta Compromise speech, Washington argued that African-Americans should focus on educational and economic improvement rather than pushing for social change in areas like desegregation and voting rights, suggesting that advances in the former would in turn lead to eventual equality. See Address by Booker T. Washington at Opening of Atlanta Exposition, Sept. 18, 1895 (available at <https://www.loc.gov/static/classroom-materials/jim-crow-segregation/documents/speech.pdf>). By contrast, Du Bois argued that the idea of “separate but equal” education was inherently unjust and furthered inequality by creating inferior educational systems and promoting oppression and injustice, and that hastening the elimination of those conditions was important to achieving true equality. W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Chapter III (1903). However, later in his career Du Bois argued that more than anything else education was essential to the African-American community, and that securing strong education should be the foremost goal, even under unfair or unacceptable circumstances:

To sum up this: theoretically, the Negro needs neither segregated schools nor mixed schools. What he needs is Education. What he must remember is that there is no magic, either in mixed schools or in segregated schools. A mixed school with poor and unsympathetic teachers, with hostile public opinion, and no teaching of truth concerning black folk, is bad. A segregated school with ignorant placeholders, inadequate equipment, poor salaries, and wretched housing, is equally bad. Other things being equal, the mixed school is the broader, more natural basis for the education of all youth. It gives wider contacts; it inspires greater self-confidence; and suppresses the inferiority complex. But other things seldom are equal, and in that case, Sympathy, Knowledge, and the Truth, outweigh all that the mixed school can offer.

W.E.B. Du Bois, “Does the Negro Need Separate Schools?,” *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 4, No. 3, The Courts and the Negro Separate School, p. 335 (July 1935). And, despite the Supreme Court of Ohio’s 1888 ruling, these issues continued as discussion points at the local level, including at CCS. For example, in 1899, then CCS Board President Charles E. Morris argued that prohibiting segregated schools made it harder for African-American teachers to get jobs, and that having separate but equal facilities would benefit those teachers and students alike. CCS Annual Report 1898-1899, pp. 20–22.

At the same time, CCS was a rapidly growing district, and these discussions of race began to intersect with discussions on new school construction and school operations several years before Dr. Thompson joined the Board in 1905. In 1902, for example, the CCS Board began to discuss options to purchase land for new schools to deal with growth and overcrowding concerns, discussions that would ultimately lead to the construction of the Champion Avenue school. CCS Jan. 7 and 21, 1902 Meeting Minutes. In 1903, a Board member raised concerns about the hiring of African-American teachers more generally, and in 1904 a member refused to vote to hire any African-American teachers. CCS Aug. 11 and Sept. 8, 1903 and June 21, 1904 Meeting Minutes. Additionally, in 1903 a Board member proposed, and the Board agreed, to ask the Attorney General whether a dedicated school for African-American students could be created consistent with the law. CCS Sept. 22, 1903 Meeting Minutes.

Further, in his yearly presidential address in 1904 (the year before Dr. Thompson joined the Board), then CCS Board President Pinckney Shriner discussed his views about how best to educate students and manage operations relative to race:

Many years ago, the State Legislature repealed the law providing for the maintenance of separate schools for colored pupils in this State, since which time mixed schools have been supported throughout the state with the exception of one or two cities. This has always been objected to by a portion of our population. The old race prejudice still exists to a certain extent and seems to be eradicable.

As a result of this system, young women of color, educated in our schools and graduates of our Normal schools have been employed as teachers in the schools. These women have been competent and faithful and are capable instructors, but their employment as teachers for white children, meets with most strenuous objection in almost every school where they are located.

If schools were maintained especially for colored pupils governed by colored teachers, it would give employment to many more colored teachers, and the schools would be just as efficient. Indeed, they should be more so, for such teachers would be more in sympathy with their pupils, being more familiar with their habits, aims and environment. This could be easily arranged in this city, for the greater portion of the colored pupils are so located, that accessible buildings could be readily provided for them.

The colored people maintain their own churches, societies, lodges and clubs, and take commendable pride in them and those who preside over them, who are always colored, and they would violently oppose any attempt to change such an order of things.

In the state there are 830,000 school children, among which probably one in ten is colored, making 83,000 colored pupils. If these children were provided with colored teachers, it would require about twenty-four hundred colored teachers, probably a hundred times as many as are now employed.

Columbus is the only city in Ohio that employs colored teachers for white children, in spite of the fact that it has enough colored pupils to employ many colored teachers profitably.

A very prominent colored gentleman who is at the head of one of the great colored institutions of learning in this country, recently informed me that of the 75 or 80 graduates annually from that institution, much the larger number could secure no employment as teachers in the north, although there are thousands of colored children to be educated.

The colored people deserve and should receive as much consideration as any citizen in the matter of education. Their children should enjoy equal facilities with the

children of the white people, in buildings, teachers and everything that goes to make up good schools, and such of them as our competent to teach should have the opportunity to do so. That opportunity would be largely increased if colored schools were maintained as above recommended.

CCS Annual Report 1903–1904, pp. 25–26.

The above provides helpful context for the state of CCS schools on issues of growth and race immediately before Dr. Thompson joined the Board, as well as the broader social discussions around these matters at that time. It is further important relative to the requestors' concern that Dr. Thompson specifically led efforts to create segregated schools; this concern does not appear to be borne out by the evidence. Rather, while Dr. Thompson joined the CCS Board in January 1905 (with his first meeting on January 16), the Board had already been discussing both race and the conditions leading to the construction of the Champion Avenue School for years. These discussions continued once Dr. Thompson joined, though, and the Committee specifically sought out documented actions or comments by Dr. Thompson to better understand his role in the establishment of the Champion Avenue School and his mindset around issues of race and education given the factors outlined in the Procedure.

The CCS Board minutes provide some instructive information. Initially, while some of his peer Board members voted against the hire of African-American teachers (see, e.g., CCS June 21, 1904 and July 17, 1905 Meeting Minutes), the Committee found no such comments or actions by Dr. Thompson in the CCS meeting records that suggested a specific bias on the basis of race in hiring.

Given the population growth noted above, though, the CCS Board frequently discussed the planning for and construction of new schools, including taking steps to develop what would become the Champion Avenue School such as the purchase of the land and discussing the property more broadly, and Dr. Thompson was engaged in these matters without notable comment. CCS Jan. 6, 20; Feb. 3, 17; March 2; May 11, 25; June 22; July 6, 20; Aug. 3, 1908 Meeting Minutes.

In the midst of these more mechanical discussions about school planning, issues of race and the potential student makeup of new schools continued to arise, both among Board members themselves and in the community. For example, at the Board's September 2, 1907 meeting—which Dr. Thompson did not attend—a Board member moved to have committees consider establishing separate schools for African-American students, but that amendment failed. CCS Sept. 2, 1907 Meeting Minutes. At their meeting two weeks later, the Board discussed the matter again, and Dr. Thompson specifically presented a resolution that they should consult with the city solicitor as to whether they had the legal authority to establish separate schools, which the Board agreed to do. CCS Sept. 16, 1907 Meeting Minutes. A month later, the solicitor made it clear that the Board could not specifically segregate schools by race. CCS Oct. 14, 1907 Meeting Minutes. The meeting minutes are not clear as to whether Dr. Thompson supported or opposed the idea of explicitly segregated schools, just that he believed that the Board should seek legal clarity on the issue.

While the Board was waiting for that legal opinion, a group of five African-American citizens submitted a resolution opposing the idea of segregated schools as had been discussed at the earlier meeting, which read as follows:

Whereas we have learned from the newspapers of the city that there is a proposed action by the Board of Education looking to the establishment of separate schools for the education of white and colored children, the same being contrary to the letter and spirit of the statutes of the State of Ohio; and

Whereas such a separation, we deem, would mitigate against and subject the colored children to undue disadvantages; and

Whereas the continued agitation of this question in the manner aforesaid is menacing the stability of our present commendable and very much appreciated free public school system; and

Whereas the boundary lines of certain school districts in this city having been drawn so as to segregate colored children was an act of injustice committed against the many, both white and colored, to satisfy the prejudices of a few; and

Whereas the spirit which prompted such actions by the Board of Education of this city is selfish, narrow and not in accord with the broad Christian spirit which should dominate every American home, therefore be it

Resolved that we, the colored citizens of Columbus, in mass meeting assembled appreciate the necessity of entering upon a discussion of this question, yet holding it to be the paramount duty of every man to look well into the questions affecting the welfare of his citizenship, hence we feel it incumbent upon us to state our position in this matter; be it further

Resolved that we condemn any action of the school board having for its object either directly or indirectly the establishment of separate schools for the education of colored children, and that we are unalterably opposed to class legislation of any kind under any conditions; be it further

Resolved that the condition of our people, objectionable or otherwise, is due largely to the treatment which we have received at the hands of the American white people, therefore, we feel that the white citizens of our city owe it to us to give us that benefit which accrues as a result of education by contact and association in the public schools, as they are.

Resolved that a copy of these resolutions be sent to the Board of Education and the press.

CCS Sept. 30, 1907 Meeting Minutes p. 306.

Concerned citizens continued to raise these issues at subsequent meetings, including at a meeting on May 11, 1908 at which Rev. E.L. Sullivan spoke as a representative of a group of African-American citizens, with the minutes reflecting that “he desired to enter a protest against the

erection of the Hawthorne School [otherwise known as the Champion Avenue School] as a colored school; and against compelling their children to pass other schools to attend such building.” CCS May 11, 1908 Meeting Minutes p. 481. Notably, the minutes reflect that Dr. Thompson specifically responded to Rev. Sullivan’s concern at the meeting by stating that “he was laboring under a misapprehension regarding the conditions pertaining to the erection of such building,” but the minutes do not specify what Dr. Thompson believed the misapprehension was or what his understanding of the conditions were. Id.

A few months later, a group of African-American citizens (it is unclear from the records whether it is the same group as above) submitted another resolution regarding the establishment of the Champion Avenue School, which read as follows:

Whereas it is a known fact that the Board of Education of the City of Columbus, Ohio, has purchased property in the neighborhood of Hawthorne Street and Champion Avenue, a location nearly equidistant from the Twenty-Third Street and the Eastwood Avenue Schools, which already are as close together as any other two schools in the City, and not so crowded as to warrant the building of a new schoolhouse in the same neighborhood; and

Whereas it is positively asserted by persons in position to know whereof they speak that the said Board intends to erect a school house on the aforesaid property and despite its denial to outline such a district as will cause all or the greater part of the colored children of that vicinity to attend this school and thus virtually establish a public school for the exclusive use of colored children; and

Whereas the laws of the State of Ohio forbids the separation or segregation of the races in the public schools of the state; and

Whereas such separation of the races, even if the laws of the state did not forbid it, always results ultimately in inferior school equipment for colored children, and moreover tends to sit the races farther and farther apart, and so to hinder that mutual sympathy and better understanding which close personal contact in the plastic years of childhood helps to cultivate; therefore be it

Resolved that we, colored citizens of the City of Columbus, Ohio, in mass meeting assembled, earnestly protest against any such action, and especially when contemplated by a Republican Board, several of whose members owe their election to office to colored voters; and

Resolved that if the Board of Education executes its rumored intention, we enter our protest at the polls and in the courts of the state; and

Resolved that a copy of these resolutions be sent to the Board of Education.

CCS June 8, 1908 Meeting Minutes pp. 504–05.

Ultimately, the CCS Board decided to move forward with building the Champion Avenue School. Before it opened, though, a group of citizens filed a lawsuit in 1910, seeking a temporary injunction to prevent it from opening; at the time Dr. Thompson was serving as Board President. CCS Aug. 29, 1910 Meeting Minutes pp. 122–23. However, following a hearing, the Court of Common Pleas refused to grant the requested temporary relief and allowed the school to open pending a final hearing. *Id.*

A few months later, Dr. Thompson presented a more detailed report to the Board about this suit and the ultimate reasoning as a member of the Board’s Finance Committee:

Your Committee on Finance and Judiciary begs leave to report that on March 15th, 1911, the Court of Common Pleas, by Judge Rogers, in the suit filed last summer by Chas. T. Smith, in which an injunction was sought to restrain the Board from equipping or using the Champion Avenue building, and making the district entirely of colored children, rendered a decision on the evidence submitted at the trial and held that the district as determined by the Board of Education was a valid one at law, and did not discriminate against the colored race more than any other school district discriminates against the white race; that owing to the crowded conditions at Garfield, Felton, Twenty-third Street, and Eastwood Schools, the Board in creating the new Champion Avenue District did not exceed its authority under the law to establish sufficient schools.

The judge also stated that the colored people of the new district are free moral agents and have no restrictions placed upon them that are not placed by law upon any white citizen.

Your committee recommends that the thanks of the board be extended to the City Solicitor, Mr. E.L. Weinland, and his first Assistant, Mr. J.L. Davies for their genuine interest and hearty cooperation in representing the Board.

CCS March 21, 1911 Meeting Minutes pp. 308–09.

In short, the court’s reasoning appeared to be that: (1) the Board was facing overcrowding at several schools and legitimately exercised its discretion in determining that a new school was needed to address it; (2) the decision to place the school in an area largely populated by African-American students did not inherently discriminate against those students; and (3) nothing required African-American students to only attend the Champion Avenue School, but rather those students could attend other schools if they lived in areas that fed into other schools.

This decision touches on, but does not examine in detail, the role that housing-related discrimination played in these issues, which the citizens who presented resolutions to the Board likewise highlighted as part of their concerns. While it is beyond the purview of this specific request, city and regional planning and real estate practices (which are outside the purview of school boards) can significantly impact individuals’ abilities to secure housing, and the net result of discriminatory practices in this regard may create *de facto* residential segregation that can directly impact school enrollment patterns. See Trounstein, J. (2018), *Segregation by Design*:

Local Politics and Inequality in American Cities (Cambridge University Press); Rothstein, R. (2017), *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (Liveright Publishing). Columbus was not immune to these issues, and indeed followed the trajectory of many cities in the early 20th century, with housing segregation growing through racially restrictive covenants (also known as deed restrictions) and zoning practices that limited rental housing. See Nightingale, C. H. (2012), *Segregation: A global history of divided cities* (University of Chicago Press); Burgess, P. (1994), *Planning for the private interest: Land use controls and residential patterns in Columbus, Ohio, 1900-1970* (Ohio State University Press). And these issues continued for many years thereafter as well as a result of Columbus's mid-century land annexation and development policies, which contributed to broader segregation issues in residential housing. See Jacobs, G. S. (1998), *Getting Around Brown: Desegregation, Development, and the Columbus Public Schools* (Ohio State University Press).

Still, Judge Robert Duncan found in the *Penick* decision outlined above (which was issued nearly seventy years later) that the district's practices around the Champion Avenue School and other similar buildings over the ensuing decades constituted improper de facto segregation, even though they were not deemed unlawful at the time of establishment. And while the minutes do not clearly reflect Dr. Thompson's specific views or perspectives on these matters, the requestors correctly note that he was a member of the Board at the time these events occurred, and that he voted alongside other Board members to establish the Champion Avenue School, even though the evidence does not substantiate the claims that he specifically led these efforts.

C. Perspectives on race/civil rights

The above information was deeply instructive as to the history of the Champion Avenue school and Dr. Thompson's actions as a CCS Board member, but it still provided only limited information about Dr. Thompson's specific perspective on these issues and what motivated his actions in his relevant roles. As noted above, to recommend a name change, the Committee must find substantial evidence that Dr. Thompson's name is fundamentally at odds with and harmful to the university's reputation for excellence and its values of integrity and inclusiveness. As such, the Committee considered the sources provided by the requestors, but also sought out other information about Dr. Thompson's specific views and actions around issues of race and civil rights more broadly to better inform its analysis regarding the scope of behavior and how central any potential improper behavior was to his career. The Committee reviewed extensive historical documentation to develop a more complete picture of Dr. Thompson's approach and perspectives around these issues. While not all of the relevant sources that the Committee reviewed are cited here, several of those sources are illustrative and instructive.

Initially, Dr. Thompson spoke frequently about ideas such as character, service, and liberty, and occasionally touched on issues of civil rights in these speeches. For example, in an 1892 address titled "The Rise and Fall of Human Liberty," recounted by Miami University's student newspaper (The Miami Student), Dr. Thompson discussed how religious and human liberty were challenged across different periods of time, citing periods of persecution from medieval times through slavery in the United States. He further spoke about the importance of religious liberty and how the protection of religious liberty can likewise lead society to make advances in civil and women's rights. *The Miami Student*, Vol. XI, No. 05 (Feb. 1892), pp. 86–87.

Further, throughout his time as the president of Ohio State, Dr. Thompson took many opportunities to advocate for the advancement of educational opportunities for underrepresented or marginalized groups and to engage with these groups positively. In 1911, for example, Ohio State hosted the first annual meeting of the American Indian Association on campus. Dr. Thompson served as the chairman of the conference, offered the use of the university's letterhead for the association's office, and personally invited Governor Harmon, Bishop Hartely, and Columbus Mayor Marshall. In a joint letter signed by members of the committee, Dr. Thompson argued that the American Indian Association needs sympathy, moral support, and cooperation of influential people; suggested that the government service in this area was inefficient; called the struggle of the individuals themselves hopeless and disheartening; described the evils they faced as "patent" and "galling"; and exhorted the university faculty to fulfill their "duty" by extending "the right hand of good fellowship." OSU Archives, Thompson Correspondence to George Marshall (Sept. 6, 1911) and to Washington Gladden (Sept. 6, 1911); The American Indian Association meeting program (Oct. 12, 1911); see also Document Discussing the Second National Conference of the American Indian Association, Oct. 1912 (with Dr. Thompson again serving on the conference committee).

Similarly, in 1911 Columbus was the host to an event for the group Agricultural and Mechanical Colleges for the Colored Race; Dr. Thompson delivered the Welcome Address. OSU Archives, Agricultural and Mechanical Colleges for the Colored Race Nov. 16, 1911 meeting program. And, in a 1903 essay concerning notable aspects of other colleges in Ohio, Dr. Thompson wrote positively of steps that Oberlin College had made toward racial equality through the admission and support of African-American students, noting that Oberlin "was on the right side, and the right prevailed" on those issues:

The admission of colored students was another feature that brought Oberlin into discussion. At the outset, Mr. Shipherd stood for it on the broad ground of humanity that moved him to found the college; on the ground that the education of the negro was essential to his progress; and on the ground that Christian people, and especially a Christian school, could not deny the colored man an opportunity. There was some feeling in his day as his correspondence will show, but the cause triumphed. In the days of the slavery agitation Oberlin was brought prominently into the discussions. It brought trouble, made some enemies and some friends. Oberlin was on the right side, and the right prevailed. In the end the reward came, and the country now honors the college for the position. The colored students have not been a large factor, and in the future will probably be fewer in number. The position of Oberlin has been approved, and the colored student is now recognized in all the northern schools. In addition to this, there are ample provisions for his higher education in nearly every state. Oberlin fought his battle and the country approved the position.

The Colleges and Universities of Ohio: An Address for the Ohio Centennial, Chillicothe, Ohio, p. 440 (May 20, 1903).

Dr. Thompson was also a prolific communicator who responded personally and promptly to a wide range of individual requests for advice or assistance, which was notable given the demands of his positions. In this correspondence, he consistently demonstrated a care for students of all backgrounds and a keen interest in seeing them succeed. For example, in 1912, a teacher at the Curry Institute in Urbana, which served African-American students, reached out to Dr. Thompson about whether one of their graduates (who had also graduated from Wilberforce University) could be admitted to Ohio State to study farming, and whether the student could find work as a janitor to cover expenses while he studied at Ohio State. President Thompson replied “I am at a loss to understand why a boy with as much education as you suggest for your friend is under the necessity of becoming a janitor. He ought to be able to work practically almost anywhere.” He continued by saying “I will keep him before me,” and “will take up the question as to some service” so that he might meet his expenses, then asked for the student’s name and address to correspond with him personally. OSU Archives, Correspondence from F. Harrison Hough to Thompson, Aug. 3, 1912; Correspondence from Thompson to Hough, Aug. 9, 1912.

In another example, an African-American student named Hartford Jennings contacted Dr. Thompson about whether he could enroll in engineering Ohio State. Dr. Thompson responded he would be “very glad to aid you in any way possible in securing an education in Electrical Engineering,” and noted that “[t]here is no objection to your coming to the Ohio State University and entering any course for which you are qualified. Every year we have a number of young people of both sexes of the negro race who attend the university without any embarrassment or hindrance. The way is entirely open so far as that is concerned and I shall be glad to be of any assistance to you in my power.” However, Dr. Thompson also spoke candidly about what he viewed as persistent prejudices that the student might face in seeking a job, especially in certain parts of the country: “I doubt very much whether an educated negro has a fair show or a show worth while in this part of the country.” Thompson specifically referenced similar challenges faced by another African-American student he had recently pursued engineering, and lamented the state of affairs for such individuals: “I am not in sympathy with this situation but feel obliged to say to you that if you secure an education in technical lines there might be some difficulty if you propose to secure employment in Ohio. Of course the world is large and you might get employment elsewhere and perhaps we ought not to be discouraged by a situation such as set out.” In his reply, Mr. Jennings acknowledged these prejudices and expressed deep frustration with the state of affairs, but thanked Dr. Thompson for his candid advice and support, noting that “[i]t is of great help to know that you do not approve of this condition of affairs.” OSU Archives, Correspondence between Harford Jennings and Thompson, July 7, Aug. 23, Aug. 25, and Sept. 1, 1913.

Similarly, Dr. Thompson corresponded with Professor F.A. McKenzie, a faculty member at Ohio State who became president at Fisk University, the first African-American school to gain recognition as a standard college. After Thompson went to Fisk to give a talk in 1915, Professor McKenzie wrote a thank-you letter in which he stated:

I trust that you may have a realization of the great appreciation I have and we all have for your contribution to us this week. Your address made a great impression and will redound to the strengthening of my administration here. I regret that you

had to sacrifice so much to come but trust that the good that has been done to the cause of Negro education will be your satisfying compensation.

OSU Archives, Correspondence from F.A. McKenzie to Thompson, Nov. 12, 1915. And in writing earlier to congratulate McKenzie on his new position as president of Fisk, Dr. Thompson stated that he understood the important work to be done there:

... [I] hope that your studies and interests hitherto will give you a broad vision of the service possible for the colored race in this country. Personally, I feel very deeply that the race prejudice is almost insurmountable and that the injustice of it is apparent to every right thinking person. I am sure that you will have the sympathy and best wishes of every one here for a successful administration as well as the realization of your hope to render a large and important service.

OSU Archives, Correspondence from Thompson to McKenzie, Jan. 20, 1915.

Similarly, Dr. Thompson took note of positive achievements of African-American students and sought to promote them. For example, in 1916, he sent a copy of an editorial about the work of an African-American student at Ohio State to G.R. Bridgeforth, Director of the Department of Agriculture at Tuskegee University in Alabama, noting “I was very much pleased this morning in looking over our daily paper to see an editorial, ‘The Triumph of Dan.’ I am sending it to you simply as a little evidence of what seems to me to be a fine spirit in a student body, and also as a little evidence of the victory this colored boy has won.” Director Bridgeforth responded “It is very kind of you to send me the paper about the colored student there, and I assure you it speaks very high for your most excellent institution; and such a spirit of fair play could not exist were it not for the personality and wonderful leadership of its president.” OSU Archives, Correspondence between Thompson and G.R. Bridgeforth, June 3 and 6, 1916.

These are but some of many examples that the Committee found of Dr. Thompson’s care and personal attention in correspondence with individuals from all walks of life, and of his broader struggle with how to manage the conditions around race and society, especially as they intersected with education at Ohio State and beyond.

D. Alleged housing discrimination at Ohio State

Finally, the requestors raised an additional reason for name removal, specifically that Dr. Thompson maintained “racially segregated student housing at The Ohio State University during his tenure as president.” As noted in the Committee’s report to the Provost, this allegation was based entirely on a single secondary source indicating that there was a “longstanding practice of denying on-campus housing to African-American students.” Greer C. Stanford-Randle, *The Black Student Movement at the Ohio State University* (2010), an M.A. thesis at Georgia State University (pp. 5–6). Despite extensive research, though, the Committee could not substantiate allegations that such discrimination had occurred during Dr. Thompson’s presidency, or any specific actions taken in that regard, and the allegations appear to be based primarily on the recollections of a student who graduated in 1949, well after Thompson’s tenure ended.

Further, the Committee found that student housing was very limited overall during Dr. Thompson's tenure as President, as only two men's dormitories and one women's dormitory existed on campus, and both had very minimal capacity. The North Dorm (open from 1874-1908) housed only 64 students; the South Dorm (open from 1875-1914) housed 20 students. The only women's dormitory, Oxley Hall, opened in 1908 to house only 75 students. See The Ohio State University Archives, John H. Herrick Archives, "North Dorm," and "South Dorm," available at <http://hdl.handle.net/1811/24360> and <http://hdl.handle.net/1811/24468>. For context, the university's total student enrollment in 1899 was 1,252, and in 1924 it was 11,460. See The Ohio State University, Annual Report of the Registrar and University Examiner, 1945-1946, p. 76. Due to this limited on-campus supply, the vast majority of students lived in off-campus housing, and thus were subject to the same housing conditions as other Columbus residents (which could have included race-based issues as noted in Section B above). However, the Committee did not find any evidence that the limited on-campus housing was racially segregated during Dr. Thompson's tenure as alleged, or that Dr. Thompson had any control, oversight, or other role in off-campus housing relevant to this request.

Final analysis and recommendation

The information outlined above and the numerous other documents that the Committee reviewed provide a more complete picture of Dr. Thompson's life, career, and the specific issues raised by the requestors. Under the Procedure, the Committee must consider that information holistically based on a series of factors and offer a recommendation as to whether a name change is appropriate. As noted above, the Committee ultimately concludes that a name change is not appropriate and that no other alternative actions are appropriate; this section outlines the Committee's reasoning in making that recommendation.

Initially, the Procedure provides that the Committee may find a request to remove a name more compelling when there is substantial evidence that:

- The namesake was found to have committed a serious violation of a state or U.S. law prior to or during that individual's lifetime following the naming recognition.
- The repugnant conduct in question was central to the namesake's career, public persona or life as a whole.
- Allegations of repugnant behavior are supported by documentary evidence that demonstrates both the extent and the intentionality of the namesake's actions.
- Honoring the namesake demonstrably jeopardizes the university's integrity and materially impedes its mission of teaching, research and public engagement; 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 public.

Alternatively, requests are less compelling when there is not substantial evidence of the above factors, or where:

- 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 toward greater inclusion, service, or reparations for prior injustices.

Ultimately, if it were to recommend a name change, the Committee would have to find substantial evidence that Dr. Thompson’s legacy is fundamentally at odds with and harmful to the university’s reputation for excellence and its values of integrity and inclusiveness, and that the name does at least two of the following:

- Creates or reinforces stereotypes of individuals or groups based on race, gender, ethnicity and other identities considered protected under law;
- Promotes professional practices, policies and scholarship that have now been debunked as fraudulent or unethical;
- Supports action or inaction that perpetuates inequity either in the namesake’s own era or in the current time; and/or
- Has a significant and demonstrably harmful impact on the university’s reputation in another way.

The Committee concluded that the evidence gathered does not support the aggravating factors. Dr. Thompson was never found to have violated any laws personally, and while CCS was found to have engaged in unlawful segregation nearly 70 years after Dr. Thompson served on its Board, the decision did not turn on his individual actions. Further, while he was on the CCS Board, he specifically pushed for review of the Board’s actions to ensure legality, and their actions were upheld as lawful during his tenure there, which occurred prior to the naming of the university library in his honor. Likewise, the Committee could not find any evidence that he maintained or supported segregated housing at Ohio State during his tenure as president.

Again, it is undeniably true that segregation is both legally and morally wrong, but the evidence does not substantiate the requestors’ claim that Dr. Thompson specifically led efforts to segregate CCS schools, and other factors (such as the impact of broader housing discrimination) contributed to the overall situation—something that even the community members who objected to the building of the Champion Avenue school at the time acknowledged. None of this is to absolve Dr. Thompson of any responsibility; as a Board member, he owed a fiduciary responsibility to the community, and as Judge Duncan noted in the *Penick* decision, the longstanding impacts from segregation in the district were significant and severe. But, Dr. Thompson’s service also predated the Supreme Court’s guidance in *Brown v. Board of Education* by several decades and his actions demonstrate an intent to understand and act in accordance with applicable law. When viewed holistically, the records obtained do not justify placing outsized responsibility on Dr. Thompson for these issues, especially in view of his documented views and actions around race more fully.

Likewise, there is not sufficient documentary evidence to substantiate individual repugnant behavior, nor was any such behavior central to Dr. Thompson’s career. As discussed above, while some members of the CCS Board engaged in behavior like refusing to approve the hire of African-American teachers that would have implicated this factor, there is no evidence that Dr. Thompson

took any such steps, and there is ample evidence that he sought to support students of all background and abilities and promote education more fully to a wide population. These materials reflect that Dr. Thompson personally opposed racial discrimination and took steps to support and promote the welfare of people regardless of their race. Indeed, the Committee found throughout the sources noted above and in its additional research that Dr. Thompson spoke thoughtfully about the inherent worth of all people both publicly and privately, and worked to support individuals of all backgrounds, especially as it pertained to education, even taking steps to reflect on personal biases and find ways to overcome them in practice.

To be clear, though, the Committee does not consider Dr. Thompson to be immune from criticism on these issues. Reasonable minds can conclude that he could have done more to address discrimination in practice given his considerable authority both as the university's president and on the CCS Board. Indeed, his positions afforded him opportunities to lead in facilitating positive social change and minimize the harms of inequality in practice—goals that he endorsed in both his public and private statements. The question before the Committee, though, is not whether Dr. Thompson was as effective as he could have been on these issues, but rather whether any of the negative behaviors that the requestors alleged were substantiated, intentional, and so central to his life and career as to warrant removal of his name from the university library. Based on its review of the evidence, the Committee does not believe that these criteria are met here. Further, it is important to consider these issues in the broader context of a society just a few decades removed from the Civil War, where even prominent civil rights leaders were debating the merits of incremental vs. aggressive efforts to promote social change. The documentation that the Committee reviewed demonstrated that Dr. Thompson ultimately favored the former in practice, and the Committee did not find any evidence that that approach was motivated by racial animus.

Requests may also be compelling if retaining the name would jeopardize the university's integrity or mission, or would otherwise exclude some members of the community. But, again, the evidence reveals that Dr. Thompson engaged thoughtfully on these issues, and worked to promote education, inclusion, and support for others in line with the university's mission and values. The impact of segregation in CCS schools over time is certainly an important part of the analysis, but when viewing his individual record holistically, the Committee did not find that the CCS factors predominated.

The mitigating factors applied more squarely here. Dr. Thompson certainly could have been more outspoken, clear, and proactive in combating the deleterious effects of racism. Alternative options may have existed around the Champion Avenue school, even if housing patterns created a higher potential for de facto segregation, and the vocal community response to these issues provided opportunities to engage community leaders in search of other solutions that did not appear to have been taken. His advice to African-American students about the potential difficulties they would face in certain careers likewise could have had a chilling effect even though it appears to have been presented both earnestly and supportively. But he also took opportunities to speak about these issues thoughtfully and honestly in both public and private forums at a time when that was far from the norm, and those themes recur much more consistently in the broader context of his life and career. Further, the record does not suggest that he took any action based on specific racial animus or an intent to either harm or demean, and there is extensive evidence to the contrary.

In evaluating the totality of evidence obtained through the extensive review process, then, the Committee concluded that while the establishment of the Champion Avenue school had deleterious consequences and the history of segregation is a lasting stain on Columbus City Schools, the evidence is not sufficient to demonstrate that Dr. Thompson led these efforts or that he participated in them for prejudicial or malicious purposes. While those actions must certainly be considered in evaluating his legacy, the fuller record reveals an individual who earnestly supported equality and civil rights, especially around education, and who took numerous opportunities to promote and recognize the inherent worth of all people, even while some of his actions in this regard may legitimately be criticized. As such, the Committee concluded that there is not sufficient evidence to meet the high bar needed for removal of Dr. Thompson's name from the library or to take alternative actions around the name.

Conclusion

While the Committee does not recommend changing the name of the Thompson Library or taking alternative actions, it wishes to thank the requestors for submitting the request and for their diligence in pursuing it, including repeated inquiries about the status of this matter over the years. They spent extensive time compiling information and advocating for their position, and approached this matter thoughtfully and in good faith throughout, as did the Committee in evaluating it. The Committee appreciates both their and the university's patience in allowing this process to move forward in line with the Procedure.

Should you need any additional information regarding the request, the materials submitted, or the Committee's conclusions, please do not hesitate to let us know.

APPENDIX

Appendix

The following sources, divided by repository, were evaluated during the inquiry.

Miami University:

- Special Collections and Archives
 - Manuscript collection: Board of Trustees. Group 4NA/Th/Mcs/Ta, Box 1
 - Correspondence
 - Letters of Recommendation
 - Annual Reports
 - Address by Thompson
 - Notice of Thompson's plan to resign, offer to increase his salary to keep him at Miami
 - Paper of suggestions for tax reform
 - Obituary, articles about death
 - Manuscript collection: Thompson, W. O. 13A-A-7A
 - Correspondence
 - Manuscript collection: Miami University, 13A-C-4B
 - Correspondence
- Newspapers
 - *Enterprise*
 - Volume II, Number 118, 15 January 1892
 - *Hamilton Evening Journal*
 - 30 July 1892, 2
 - *Los Angeles Herald*
 - Volume XXXI, Number 1, 2 October 1903
 - *Marietta Daily Leader*
 - 25 June 1899
 - *Phillips County Herald*
 - 26 June 1891, 2: Thompson elected president of Miami University
 - *Perrysburg Journal*
 - December 24, 1898
 - *Press Democrat*
 - Volume XXIX, Number 246, 3 October 1903
 - *San Francisco Call*
 - Volume 71, Number 46, 15 January 1892
 - *The Bellefontaine Republican*
 - June 16, 1899
 - *The Brookville Democrat*
 - 27 August 1896, 2

- *The Indianapolis Journal*
 - 30 August 1891, 4: *Union County Teacher's Institute speech "Some Problems in Public Education"*
 - 12 March 1892, 5: Was a judge for an inter-university debate
 - 26 August 1896, 3: *Gave address to the Union County Teacher's Association Institute titled "The Coming Education"*
- *The Miami Student*
 - Vol. 009, No. 09 (June, 1890), 207
 - Vol. 011, No. 01 (Oct., 1891), 5
 - Vol. 011, No. 03 (Dec., 1891)
 - Vol. 011, No. 04 (Jan. 1892)
 - Vol. 011, No. 05 (Feb., 1892), 86-87
 - Vol. 012, No. 02 (Oct., 1892), 23-24
 - Vol. 012, No. 05 (Feb., 1893)
 - Vol. 012, No. 05 (Feb., 1893)
 - Vol. 012, No. 06 (Mar., 1893)
 - Vol. 012, No. 06 (Apr., 1893)
 - Vol. 012, No. 08 (June, 1893), 168-171
 - Vol. 013, No. 01 (Oct., 1893), 12
 - Vol. 013, No. 02 (Nov., 1893), 35-36
 - Vol. 013, No. 08 (May, 1894)
 - Vol. 014, No. 05 (Feb., 1895)
 - Vol. 014, No. 06 (March 1895)
 - Vol. 015, No. 01 (Oct., 1895)
 - Vol. 015, No. 02 (Nov., 1895)
 - Vol. 015, No. 03 (Dec., 1895), 53
 - Vol. 015, No. 05 (Jan., 1896)
 - Vol. 015, No. 05 (Feb., 1896)
 - Vol. 015, No. 06 (Mar., 1896)
 - Vol. 015, No. 08 (May, 1896)
 - Vol. 015, No. 09 (June, 1896), 156-157
 - Vol. 018, No. 01 (Oct., 1898)
- *The Monticello Herald*
 - 31 October 1895, 8: *Speech at Harvest Festival in Indiana titled "Some Phases of Socialism"*
- *The News-Herald*
 - Vol. 63, No.10), 18 May 1899, 1.
- *The Ohio Democrat*
 - June 17, 1898

- *The Stark County Democrat*
 - April 08, 1897
- Book
 - William Oxley Thompson Inaugural Address
- Thesis
 - John Milholland, *The Negro in Oxford, Ohio 1887-1947* (Oxford, Ohio: Miami University, 1947).
- Pamphlet
 - The diamond anniversary volume

The Ohio State University:

- University Archives
 - Office of the President: UA.RG.3.E (69 cubic feet)
 - Correspondence (200 folders)
 - Speech transcripts
 - Hand-written speech transcripts/notes
 - Transcribed messages to and from Thompson and faculty about courses offered, student rules, teaching load, payment, budget, etc.
 - President's Report
 - Report by Joseph Denney about visit to Normal Schools, Teachers Colleges, and manual training schools
- University Annual Reports: 1899-1926
- Commencement and Convocation Addresses
 - "The meaning of the war: annual convocation address September 20, 1917"
 - "The Ohio State baccalaureate sermon"
- Ohio State University Monthly (alumni magazine)
- Newspapers
 - *Akron Daily Democrat*
 - 03 July 1900
 - *Fulton County Tribune*
 - March 9, 1917 (p.1)
 - May 11, 1917 (p.2)
 - August 13, 1920 (p.8)
 - *Morgan County Democrat*
 - June 11, 1931 (p.3)
 - *Newark Leader*
 - September 23, 1921 (p.6)
 - *The American Issue*
 - June 1, 1926 (p.2)

- *The Bellefontaine Republican*
 - August 15, 1899
- *The Columbus Evening Dispatch*
 - June 9, 1909, p.2
 - January 30, 1910, p.6
 - February 13, 1910, p.23
 - May 4, 1910, p.1
 - May 13, 1910, p.31
 - May 29, 1910, p.23
 - June 2, 1910, p.7
 - February 7, 1911, p.13
 - March 21, 1911, p.3
 - September 2, 1911, p.3
 - October 12, 1911, p.1
 - October 14, 1911, p.3
 - January 3, 1912, p.3
 - March 9, 1912, p.7
 - April 2, 1912, p.13
 - December 25, 1912, p.1
- *The Democratic Banner*
 - September 20, 1910, p.2
 - November 19, 1920, p.2
- *The Mahoning Dispatch*
 - April 4, 1919, p.8
- *The Marion Daily Mirror*
 - September 16, 1910, p.1
 - October 29, 1910, p.11
- *The Medina Sentinel*
 - March 28, 1919, p.4
- *The Miami Student*
 - Vol. 022, No. 01 (Oct., 1902), 12
- *The News-Herald*
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- *The Republican Herald*
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 - “A study of our taxes”
 - “Librarianship as a profession”
 - “The colleges and universities of Ohio: an address for the Ohio Centennial”
 - “The Effect of Moral Education I the Public Schools Upon the Civic Life of the Community”
 - “Report of the School revenue commission to the Ohio State Teachers’ Association”
 - “Self-government by students in school and college”
 - “Federal and state aid to investigation”
 - “A decade of prospect”
 - “The importance of teaching in the high school”
 - Speech given by Thompson to the National Association of State Universities
 - Conference Program for the “Agricultural and Mechanical Colleges for the Colored Race”
 - “The Economic Basis of Education”
 - “Ways and means, the next steps”
 - “The Influence of the Morill Act Upon American Higher Education”
 - “The State and Religion,” Religious Education, Vol. 8, Issue 1 (April 1913), 81-82.
 - “Five sermons: delivered to the students at the university chapel”
 - “Public Education in Ohio”
 - “The Church after the War”
 - “The perpetuity of civilization”
 - Speech to the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce, “Shall We Have Enough to Eat next Winter?”
 - “The Land-Grant College and Agricultural Education”
 - “The college graduate in modern life”
 - “How Far Should, or May, Land-Grant Colleges Engage in Teaching Elementary Subjects Not Generally Recognized as Belonging to the College Curriculum?”
 - “The State and Higher Education in Ohio”
 - “Religious instruction”
 - “A Talk on Civic Honesty”
 - “The spirit of the land-grant institutions”

Columbus City Schools:

- Annual Reports: 1898-1916
- Calendars: 1845-1945
- Meeting Minutes:
 - 1898 to 1911

Ohio History Connection:

- Manuscript Collections
 - Bethany Home, Columbus, Ohio, 1899-1901 papers
 - University Club of Columbus (Ohio) papers, 1906-1907

Additional materials:

- Newspapers
 - *Ohio State Journal*
 - undated
 - *The Columbus Evening Dispatch*
 - August 18, 1907, p.44
 - September 3, 1907, p.2
 - September 15, 1908, p.7
 - January 31, 1909, p. 19
 - February 2, 1909, p. 10
 - March 2, 1909, p.3
 - April 27, 1909, p.10
 - June 19, 1909, p.3
 - September 5, 1909, p.9
 - September 20, 1909, p.1
 - November 23, 1909, p.11
 - January 4, 1910, p.8
 - January 9, 1910, p.2
 - April 21, 1910, p.6
 - June 7, 1910, p.3
 - June 24, 1910, p.11
 - July 19, 1910, p.2
 - July 23, 1910, p.2
 - August 27, year unknown p.1
 - October 12, 1910, p.6
 - November 30, 1910, p.3
 - December 9, 1910, p.1
 - January 11, 1911, p.13
 - January 30, 1911, p.4
 - February 8, 1911, p.7
 - March 15, 1911, p.1
 - March 16, 1911, p.3
 - April 2, 1911, p.12
 - September 6, 1911, p.7
 - February 7, 1912, p.5

- April 3, 1912, p.5
 - September 12, 1912, p.4
 - September 18, 1912, p.3
- *The Gazette*
 - August 13, 1910, p.2 (Cleveland, Ohio)
- Legal Cases
 - *Board of Education v. State ex rel. Gibson*
 - *Brown v. Board of Education*
 - *Penick v. Columbus Board of Education*
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 - *Smith v. Columbus Board of Education*
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 - Burgess, *Planning for the Private Interest: Land Use Controls and Residential Patterns in Columbus, Ohio*
 - Dimond, *Beyond Bussing*, 231-232
 - Du Bois, *Does the Negro Need Separate Schools?*
 - Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*
 - Jacobs, *Getting Around Brown: Desegregation, Development, and the Columbus Public Schools*, 13
 - Mark, *Negros in Columbus*
 - Nightengale, *Segregation: A Global History of Divided Cities*
 - Randolph Ward, *A Historical Analysis*, 143-144
 - Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*
 - Smith and Lentz, *African-American Settlements and Communities in Columbus, Ohio: A Report*
 - Stanford-Randle, *The Black Student Movement at the Ohio State University*
 - Trounstine, *Segregation by Design: Local Politics and Inequality in American Cities*
- Address
 - Washington, address at opening of Atlanta Exposition

2023 REPORT TO PROVOST

MEMORANDUM

TO: Melissa Gilliam, Executive Vice President and Provost

FROM: Yolanda Zepeda, Interim Vice Provost for Diversity and Inclusion
Brandon Lester, Senior Associate General Counsel
Co-chairs, Standing Advisory Committee for the Review of University Space and Entity Names

DATE: January 18, 2023

RE: Naming Review Request/Thompson Library

Introduction

Pursuant to the Procedure for Reviewing Names of University Spaces and Entities (“Procedure”) established by the Board of Trustees (“Board”), any faculty, staff, student, or alumnus may request a review of a University space or entity name based on allegations that the individual or entity at issue engaged in “misconduct or other inappropriate behavior” that is “harmful to Ohio State’s reputation for excellence and its values of integrity and inclusiveness.” Upon receipt of a proper request, the Standing Advisory Committee for the Review of University Space and Entity Names¹ (“Committee”) must initially make a recommendation to you as to whether the University should engage in a full review of and investigation into that request, or whether the request should be denied without further investigation. This memorandum outlines the Committee’s recommendation as to a request to review the name of the Thompson Library.

As discussed more fully below, four alumni working collaboratively alleged that the library’s namesake, former University President William Oxley Thompson, took a “leadership role, as a member of the Columbus City Schools Board of Education, in establishing de facto racially segregated schools in Columbus, starting in 1909 and lasting until 1977, and ... [maintained] racially segregated student housing at The Ohio State University during his tenure as president.”

¹ The Committee members are: (1) John Brooke, Arts and Sciences Distinguished Professor of History and Warner Woodring Chair in American History, Department of History; (2) Molly Ranz Calhoun, President and CEO, The Ohio State University Alumni Association; (3) Tamar Chute, Professor and University Archivist, University Libraries; (4) Jon Fritz, Delegate, Council of Graduate Students; (5) Russell Hassan, Ambassador Milton A. and Roslyn Z. Wolf Chair in Public and International Affairs, John Glenn College of Public Affairs; (6) Tanisha Jenkins, Associate Vice President for Belonging and Inclusion, Office of Student Life; (7) Benjamin Kanzeg, Associate Vice President and Executive Director of Policy, Office of Government Affairs; (8) Brandon Lester, Senior Associate General Counsel, Office of Legal Affairs (co-chair); (9) Kelsey Lowman, Chair of the University Senate Council on Student Affairs, Undergraduate Student Government; (10) Brian Mittendorf, Fisher Designated Professor of Accounting, Fisher College of Business; (11) Jody Patterson, Associate Professor, Roy Lichtenstein Foundation Chair, Department of History of Art; (12) Ryan Schmiesing, Senior Vice Provost for External Engagement, Office of Academic Affairs; and (13) Yolanda Zepeda, Interim Vice Provost, Office of Diversity and Inclusion (co-chair).

Following extensive review and discussion, and by a vote of 12-1, the Committee recommends that the University perform a full review of this request pursuant to the Procedure. Importantly, though, this recommendation is not and should not be viewed as a conclusion on the allegations' merit or lack thereof; rather, the Committee finds that the requestors have met the initial threshold for further review, and that a more thorough examination of historical records beyond those provided by the requestors would be beneficial to the University in evaluating this matter.

This memorandum explains the review process as set forth in the Procedure, the requests and supporting evidence, and the Committee's analysis and recommendation for your consideration.

Review process

As noted above, the Procedure permits any current University faculty, staff, or student or any alumnus to request the review of a space or entity name. Requestors must "provide substantial evidence of misconduct or other inappropriate behavior by the individual or entity at issue and demonstrate that that conduct or behavior is harmful to Ohio State's reputation for excellence and its values of integrity and inclusiveness." Only reasons set forth by requestors will be considered at each stage of the process to support a name removal, and requestors bear the burden of providing full, accurate and convincing information as to why the name should be removed in submitting their request. Requestors must "thoroughly document[] the sources used to support their request and explain[] why those sources are reliable."

Further, requestors must answer additional questions in support of their requests, specifically:

- Why was the building named after this person? Was the name honorific or in recognition of a philanthropic gift (donation)? If it was honorific, briefly describe the honoree's significant contributions to Ohio State.
- Why is the legacy of the namesake fundamentally at odds with the principles guiding the campus today? That is, explain why the legacy's pernicious effects outweigh the individual's contributions. What substantial evidence is there to support this claim?
- What is the likely impact on members of the university community if the name is retained and/or removed?
- What other relevant information or arguments should be considered?

Once a request is made and the co-chairs determine that it includes all required criteria, it is subject to an up to five-step review process:

- **Initial Committee Review.** The Committee reviews the request to determine whether it provides substantial evidence to merit further consideration, and issues a recommendation to the Provost as to whether that should occur. At this step of the process, the Committee may only rely on evidence submitted by the requestors.
- **Provost Review.** The Provost reviews the recommendation to determine whether to advance the request for further review, or deny it such that no further action is taken.
- **Committee Investigation.** If the request is advanced, the Committee conducts a thorough review and investigation to determine whether the name at issue should be removed, some other action should be taken, or no action should be taken, and issues a recommendation to the President. At this step, the Committee may review any

evidence that it deems appropriate, regardless of whether it was provided by the requestors, to provide a more fulsome conclusion as to the appropriateness of a name removal, but may only investigate the grounds for removal that the requestors set forth.

- **President Review and Decision.** The President reviews the recommendation in consultation with the Provost and other officials as appropriate, and determines whether to remove the name, take some other action, or take no action. The President’s decision is final, except that the Board must review and approve all proposed name removals or modifications.
- **Board Decision.** The Board has the final decisional authority as to whether to remove or modify a name.

Importantly, and as outlined in the Procedure, “[n]ames of spaces and entities are not and should not be changed lightly,” and individuals who request a change to such names “must make a compelling case for the name removal or amendment.”

Requests regarding Thompson Library

Four alumni submitted requests regarding the Thompson Library name from June through August 2022: (1) Carol Brown Dodson (M.A., 1970); (2) Dr. Linda Fenner (Ph.D., 1995); (3) Dr. Margaret Bledsoe Kasten (Ph.D., 1981); (4) Dr. Mark Stewart (M.A., 1973; Ph.D., 1980). The requests and all materials submitted in support are attached to this memorandum. Because the requestors indicated that they were working collaboratively, and given the similarity of their requests, the Committee consolidated them for review. The requestors provided information in support of their requests from June through October 2022.

Initially, the requestors acknowledged that Dr. Thompson played a pivotal role in the University’s development during his long tenure as president (from 1899 to 1925). They identified this period as one of significant institutional growth, both in terms of student population (expanding tenfold from approximately 1,200 students to 12,000) and in prestige, leading the University to be recognized as the state’s flagship institution and building the foundation for the national prominence seen today. They noted that, among other things, Dr. Thompson significantly expanded and promoted higher education in general, pushed to include practical vocational training alongside the traditional liberal arts curriculum, helped to develop the “Ohio Plan” that was incorporated into the 1916 National Defense Act (leading to the creation of the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC)), and developed the vision to build Ohio Stadium. The requestors generally agreed that Dr. Thompson “had an undeniable positive impact on The Ohio State University.”

While acknowledging these significant contributions, the requestors argued that Dr. Thompson’s name should be removed from the library given his alleged “leadership role, as a member of the Columbus City Schools Board of Education, in establishing de facto racially segregated schools in Columbus, starting in 1909 and lasting until 1977,” and “maintenance of racially segregated student housing at The Ohio State University during his tenure as president.” They claimed that Dr. Thompson’s actions in these areas during his tenure as University president and member of the Columbus City Schools Board of Education (from 1905 to 1924, serving as president from 1909 to 1910) are contrary to the University’s diversity and inclusion goals and values. As such,

they alleged that the overall net impact to removing Dr. Thompson's name from the library would be a positive one, despite his other accomplishments and service to the University.

In making this request, the requestors focused primarily on the segregation of Columbus City Schools, and the impact that action had both at the time and moving forward in the community. They claimed that school segregation began in earnest with the school board's decision to build the Champion Avenue School in 1909 (during Dr. Thompson's tenure). They contended that that action began a trend of predominantly sending African-American and white students to different schools, which lasted until 1977 when Judge Robert Duncan of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Ohio ended it in the landmark decision *Penick v. Columbus Bd. of Edn.*, 429 F. Supp. 229 (S.D. Ohio 1977). They noted the significant negative effects segregation had on the students and families involved, and how that practice had broader deleterious effects on society. Secondarily, they noted that, during Dr. Thompson's tenure at the University and for several years thereafter, student housing was segregated along racial lines.

Importantly, though, the requestors must specifically identify his individual misconduct or other inappropriate behavior and provide reliable references in support. On that point, in addition to their perspective as noted above, the requestors cited to the following sources on which they relied² for this submission, summarized briefly as follows and combined when appropriate. The Committee reviewed each of these sources in conducting its deliberations.

- Wil Haygood, Tigerland (2015), a book published by Simon and Schuster. Haygood is a journalist and currently serves as the Boadway Distinguished Scholar-in-Residence at Miami (OH) University.
- Gregory S. Jacobs, Getting Around Brown: Desegregation, Development, and the Columbus Public Schools (1998), a book published by The Ohio State University Press. Jacobs is a documentary filmmaker.
- "Favors Separate Schools for the Negro Children: Dr. W.O. Thompson is Not Unfriendly to Them, But Thinks It for Best," Columbus Dispatch, September 17, 1907 (p. 2).
- "Will Protest Against Move for Segregation: Negro Political League Suspects Intentions of School Board," Columbus Dispatch, June 19, 1909 (p. 3).
 - In discussing the history of the Columbus public schools and segregation over time, both Haygood (pp. 149–50) and Jacobs (pp. 11–14) cite a quote by Dr. Thompson in 1907 that "[i]t is in the best interests of both [races] that they be educated in separate schools." In discussing this quote, these individuals also discuss contemporaneous protests against this idea to highlight the prominent concerns existing then over establishing de facto separate facilities such as the later-constructed Champion Avenue School.

² In communications with the Committee co-chairs, the requestors referenced a few additional sources, including masters and doctoral dissertations by Dr. Adah Ward Randolph that further discuss the issues noted in her article cited in the official materials; an article by Thomas Albright, Judson Jeffries, and N. Michael Goeck with anecdotes about the University's climate for African-American students in the 1940s (after Dr. Thompson's tenure); an anonymous letter to Governor Harry Davis in 1921 that complained of poor treatment of African-American students at the University (referenced in the Builders of Ohio source); and an excerpt from Dr. Thompson's commencement address in 1912 that generally rejected racism. The requestors did not present these materials as the "official" sources on which they relied, and they do not substantially change the nature of their request, so they were not included in the official list set forth above.

- The Columbus Dispatch stories provide contemporaneous reporting on both Dr. Thompson's statement and the protests associated with these actions.
- Adah Ward Randolph, *Champion Avenue School: A Historical Analysis* (1997), prepared for the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. Dr. Randolph has an M.A. and Ph.D. from Ohio State, and is currently a faculty member in the College of Education at Ohio University.
 - This paper provides a deeper dive into the Champion Avenue School's history and the school's lasting impacts. As to Dr. Thompson in particular, Dr. Randolph states that he moved to explore the possibility of creating separate schools as early as 1907, and that the school board later decided to create de facto separate schools through building placement given the illegality of de jure segregation. Dr. Randolph also discussed how this practice reduced student opportunities.
- *Penick v. Columbus Bd. of Edn.*, 429 F. Supp. 229 (S.D. Ohio 1977), the court opinion discussed above, which was authored by Judge Robert Duncan, an OSU alumnus.
 - As noted above, in *Penick* a group of plaintiffs challenged what they maintained was the effective segregation of Columbus schools. After tracing a long history of effective segregation beginning with the establishment of the Champion Avenue School in 1909 (pp. 234–40), Judge Duncan concluded that effective segregation had occurred, that it was unlawful, and that an inference of an intent to segregate could be drawn from the district's failure over time to correct these issues despite notice of them. While there is only one specific reference to Dr. Thompson in the opinion (citing a quote from him in 1913 relaying a victory over a suit to challenge segregation at that time, p. 235), the opinion addresses multiple decades worth of district decisions related to segregation, including those made during Dr. Thompson's time on the school board.
- Amy Fancelli Zalimas, "William Oxley Thompson on Popular Education, Social Justice, and Social Control in Progressive Era Ohio," in *Builders of Ohio, A Biographical History* (Warren Van Tine and Michael Pierce, eds. 2003), a book published by The Ohio State University Press. Van Tine (now deceased) was a longtime faculty member in the University's Department of History, including when the time the book was published; Pierce has a Ph.D. in history from the University and is currently a faculty member in the Department of History at the University of Arkansas; and Zalimas is an instructor at Cristo Rey High School in Columbus.
 - The chapter explores Dr. Thompson's broader legacy and attempts to put his actions as president and school board member into broader context in light of the progressive social reform movement and how society was addressing systemic racism. Zalimas examines what she views as contradictions in Dr. Thompson's views and actions on racial equality.
 - For example, while Dr. Thompson spoke often about the democratizing power of higher education and worked to ensure that education had practical applications to help students better themselves, Zalimas notes that he admittedly advised African-American students not to pursue specific fields of study such as engineering based on the perception that few opportunities would be available: "I am discouraging colored young men from taking courses in engineering, chiefly on the ground that social conditions will not tolerate their presence." Alternately, Zalimas cites evidence that Dr. Thompson indicated displeasure with the realities of racism and

- publicly criticized the KKK and other forms of such conduct in practice, but also claims that he advised such students “not to force the issue” of equality and made statements regarding limiting the right of African-Americans to vote.
- Zalimas also provides further context regarding the opening of the Champion Avenue School beyond that outlined in the above sources, including statements from Dr. Thompson that indicate his awareness that the school would be overwhelmingly populated with African-American students and staffed with all African-American teachers despite legal prohibitions on formal segregation.
 - Greer C. Stanford-Randle, *The Black Student Movement at the Ohio State University* (2010), an M.A. thesis at Georgia State University. Dr. Stanford-Randle, who later obtained a Ph.D. from Antioch University, was the former president of the Paul Laurence Dunbar (Dayton, Ohio) branch of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) and later Vice President of Membership for ASALH before her death in 2022. She completed her M.A. and Ph.D. in her 60s.
 - Dr. Stanford-Randle primarily examines the African-American student experience at the University in the decades after Dr. Thompson served as president, but specifically references the issues associated with the Champion Avenue School and further refers to a “longstanding practice of denying on-campus housing to African-American students” into the 1940s and 1950s as documented by the OSU Alumni Association and other University sources (pp. 4–6).

Committee review and recommendation

At this initial stage of review, the Committee is required to make a recommendation as to whether or not further consideration is appropriate for your review and determination. And, as noted above, the Committee can only review information provided by the requestors to make this determination, and at least three-fourths of all Committee members must support a recommendation to proceed. Further consideration, if approved, would allow the Committee to investigate the matter more fully, including by reviewing sources other than those provided by the requestors to provide fuller context to the claims.

The Committee reviewed this request fully and held multiple sessions to discuss the materials provided. Ultimately, the Committee decided, by a vote of 12-1, to recommend that this request receive further review and investigation in accordance with the Procedure.

Initially, Committee members universally agreed that segregation is morally wrong, contrary to the university’s values, and unlawful. The Committee’s charge, though, is not to advise on whether segregation is wrong, but rather to determine whether the requestors provided sufficient information to warrant a deeper investigation into whether Dr. Thompson’s actions warrant removing his name from the library. And, on that point, there was significant discussion regarding the discrete acts he is alleged to have committed, the support for those allegations, and the balancing effect of his contributions to the University.

It is undisputed that Dr. Thompson served in prominent leadership roles at both the University and on the board of the Columbus City Schools, and that in these roles he would have had the ability to make decisions that impacted both institutions on these issues. Further, the specific evidence

regarding historical segregation in Columbus City Schools is clear, and documented extensively in the *Penick* decision. However, the evidence submitted by the requestors does not clearly identify what specific roles Dr. Thompson played relative to the allegations made, or what his intentions or motivations for taking any such actions were beyond his positions of leadership in the organizations.

On these points, the Committee found that there was countervailing evidence regarding Dr. Thompson's specific views and actions. While the requestors provided significantly more evidence as to the segregation of Columbus City Schools than the issues with segregated housing on campus, even then the specifics of Dr. Thompson's actions and motivations remained murky. Committee members discussed the conflicting information given in, for example, the Builders of Ohio book chapter regarding different statements attributed to Dr. Thompson about his views on racial progress and how best to address societal views toward race, and what those views mean in the context of his recognition by the University. There was robust discussion over how to view those sorts of statements given their historical context and the bedrock values of the institution.

In those discussions, the Committee unanimously agreed that relying solely on the record presented by the requestors makes it difficult to reach a conclusion in that regard. The Committee was split, however, on what to do about that difficulty. Facing those issues, one Committee member voted against further review, concluding that the evidence was not substantial enough to meet the high standard set forth in the Procedure, and that requestors should be required to produce more definitive evidence of misconduct and harm to the University's reputation by Dr. Thompson specifically to justify the significant time, energy, and resources of a fuller review. Several members acknowledged that concern, and recognized that the Procedure's requirements are by their nature lofty, and should not be satisfied easily.

However, the remaining Committee members ultimately concluded that the evidence provided was substantial enough to warrant further review given the facts provided about this situation more broadly, even with the ambiguity over Dr. Thompson's discrete actions in this regard. In establishing the possibility of full investigation following initial review, the Procedure recognizes that requestors may only have access to partial information, such that definitive information one way or the other is unlikely to arise at this stage. The question is whether the requestors have substantially shown that a broader review to obtain those full facts would be appropriate, and the remaining Committee members believe that it would given these materials.

Ultimately, the Procedure makes it clear that any decisions on naming issues must be viewed on a true balance of the positive contributions to the University against the deleterious effects of substantial misconduct. And, the Committee concluded that, given the historical prominence and concern over this issue, obtaining clear and complete information and making a fully informed judgment will best serve the University community and avoid the reputational harms that may come with speculation and theorization from an incomplete record. As such, the Committee recommends that further review occur in accordance with the Procedure.

As noted above, though, one word of caution is important. This recommendation is not, and should not be viewed as, a conclusion on the ultimate merit of the allegations made by the requestors. The Committee was adamant that, while it believes that there is substantial evidence sufficient to

justify further review, the evidence is too equivocal and incomplete at this point to support any reliable conclusion as to whether a name change is appropriate. Should you agree that further review is appropriate, the Committee would approach that process neutrally and with a steadfast commitment to obtaining the full context of this situation so as to provide a clear and well-supported recommendation as to whether a name change is appropriate.

Conclusion

As stated above, the Committee, having found that the initial criteria have been met to justify further review, recommends that a full review and investigation into this request be performed so as to make a full and informed determination as to whether a name change is appropriate in line with the Procedure. Should you need any additional information regarding the request, the materials submitted, or the Committee conclusions, please do not hesitate to let us know.