

Resolution

Amending the Name of Morgan Hall

WHEREAS, diversity, inclusion, and respect are fundamental values of the University of Alabama System;

WHEREAS, under Board Rule 411, the Board of Trustees has the exclusive discretion to amend, remove, or withdraw any naming at any time and for any reason;

WHEREAS, on June 8, 2020, the President Pro Tempore of the Board of Trustees appointed a working group of Trustees to conduct a comprehensive review of the names of buildings, structures, and spaces on all UA System campuses;

WHEREAS, the working group's review is governed by the institutional best interests of the University of Alabama System, recognizing that although no person is infallible and widespread views commonly change over time, the Board of Trustees must take great care to demonstrate and honor the current values of the University of Alabama System;

WHEREAS, the working group's initial inquiry is to determine whether an individual after whom a building, structure, or space is named made any substantial, lasting, and unique contributions to the University of Alabama System;

WHEREAS, if the working group concludes that an individual made substantial, lasting, and unique contributions, the working group will then weigh those contributions against any actions the individual took, or views the individual held, that are inconsistent with the current values of the University of Alabama System, taking into consideration the prevalent moral, religious, and political norms of the individual's time;

WHEREAS, based upon consultation with several historical experts and its own investigation, the working group reviewed the historical record as it relates to John Tyler Morgan, a longtime United States Senator;

WHEREAS, the working group concluded that Morgan made a substantial and lasting contribution to the University of Alabama;

WHEREAS, in this regard, the working group found that Senator Morgan successfully lobbied Congress for reparations from the federal government to

rebuild the University of Alabama campus after many of the campus buildings were burned on April 4, 1865;

WHEREAS, as a direct result of Senator Morgan's efforts, on April 23, 1884, Congress granted 46,080 acres of public lands to the State of Alabama for the benefit of the University of Alabama;

WHEREAS, the University of Alabama sold certain of the lands from the 1884 land grant and used the proceeds to construct, among other things, Clark Hall, Manly Hall, Garland Hall, Tuomey Hall, and Barnard Hall;

WHEREAS, the University of Alabama still retains approximately 22,000 acres from the 1884 land grant in its endowment and continues to receive income therefrom;

WHEREAS, on June 1, 1910, in recognition of this contribution, the Board of Trustees approved naming the then-Central Academic Building, which now houses, among other things, the English department, after Senator Morgan;

WHEREAS, having concluded Senator Morgan made a substantial and lasting contribution to the University of Alabama, the working group then examined whether Senator Morgan's actions and views were lawful at the time expressed and, considering the prevalent moral, religious or political norms of the time, whether such views or activities were so egregious as to outweigh even meaningful contributions;

WHEREAS, Morgan was a delegate to the Alabama Secession Convention in 1861 and advocated for the African slave trade under the guise of "pure Christian philanthropy": "if I could consent to commit the State to the active work of Christian evangelization – I should pledge all its powers to go to Africa and to bring over ship loads of poor, savage slaves to a country where they could be raised to the condition of Christian slaves, which is the highest point that the negro race can reach, consistently with Divine Law, and with their mental and physical organization";

WHEREAS, Morgan believed "it ha[d] become the solemn necessity on our part to protect the Caucasian race on this continent against the intrusion of Oriental people," advocated for mass emigration of African Americans to other countries, including the Congo, Cuba, and the Philippines, and supported the Butler Emigration Bill, which would have provided a federal subsidy to African Americans in the South who chose to leave the United States;

WHEREAS, Morgan was a white supremacist who, in a debate in the Senate, referred to “burn[ing] down the barn to get rid of the rats...the rats being the negro population,” and fought for thirty years in the Senate to maintain white supremacy, including vehemently opposing the Federal Elections Bill – which would have provided measures to enforce the Fifteenth Amendment in the South – and advocating for literacy tests as a means of disenfranchising hundreds of thousands of African Americans, a practice that was later outlawed;

WHEREAS, based upon these findings, the working group unanimously recommended that the Board of Trustees remove Morgan’s name from the building currently called Morgan Hall in order to dispel any implication that the Board of Trustees supports in any way the racial views expressed by Morgan;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Trustees that the name of Morgan Hall on the Tuscaloosa campus is hereby amended to the English Building;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the University of Alabama prepare a display at the location inside the English Building where Senator Morgan’s portrait once hung with the following language drafted by a historical expert retained by the Board of Trustees:

In 1910, at this building’s dedication, the University of Alabama’s Board of Trustees named it ***Morgan Hall***, for John Tyler Morgan of Selma. A longtime state political leader, Morgan had died three years earlier, but had served as one of Alabama’s U.S. Senators for the last thirty years of his life.

As a Senator, Morgan rendered the University a vital service in a time of need. In 1884, he successfully lobbied Congress for a federal land grant of 46,080 acres to compensate for University buildings burned by Union troops almost twenty years earlier, in the closing weeks of the Civil War. Until that grant, for almost two decades after the war, the University had struggled to survive financially. Revenue from leases and sales of this land funded the construction of at least five new buildings and other major campus improvements. It helped the University regain a more solid financial footing on which it would continue to build. Lease revenues still benefit the University today, and the University continues to be grateful for Senator Morgan’s efforts on its behalf.

Senator Morgan was, however, also an ardent white supremacist. He led Alabama in suppressing the rights of African Americans

and denying them full citizenship, and these efforts were a core element of his work for half a century. Senator Morgan defended slavery before the Civil War, advocated secession from the Union to protect slavery, led in restoring white control after the Civil War, and helped establish the system of racial segregation. His harsh actions and strident words contributed to decades of racial injustice in Alabama and the United States.

Because these actions conflict so profoundly with the current values of the University of Alabama System, the Board of Trustees voted on September 17, 2020, to remove Senator Morgan's name from the building. The Board also called for the placement of this plaque to explain the reasons both for the University's gratitude to Senator Morgan and for the decision to change the building's name.