

## **Resolution**

### **Amending the Name of the Ferguson Student Center to the University of Alabama Student Center and Naming the Ferguson Theater**

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

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; and

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; and

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; and

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; and

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 expressed, 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; and

WHEREAS, based upon consultation with several historical experts and its own investigation, the working group reviewed the historical record as it relates to William Hill Ferguson, a former member of the Board of Trustees; and

WHEREAS, the working group concluded that Mr. Ferguson made a substantial and lasting contribution in myriad ways to the University of Alabama; and

WHEREAS, as a student at the University of Alabama, Mr. Ferguson excelled both in academics and extracurriculars, earning Phi Beta Kappa and Omicron Delta Kappa honors, serving as an editor of the *Corolla*, playing on the 1896 football team, and ultimately graduating with both a bachelor's degree and a law degree; and

WHEREAS, as the 28-year-old president of the University of Alabama alumni society, Mr. Ferguson led the Greater University Campaign, a highly successful capital campaign that ultimately led to the construction of Comer Hall, Smith Hall, and the English Building (then known as Morgan Hall); and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ferguson had a remarkably successful business career with his lifelong friend, Robert Jemison, Jr., who together formed Jemison Realty Company and developed numerous areas in Birmingham, including Forest Park, Redmont, and Mountain Brook Estates; and

WHEREAS, in 1919, Mr. Ferguson was elected to the Board of Trustees and served as a Trustee for 40 years, including 12 years as President Pro Tempore from 1947-1959; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ferguson had an unparalleled devotion to the University of Alabama and was recognized by the 1960 *Corolla*: "A single page could never tell the gratitude and undying appreciation that the University has for this great man . . . an alumnus beyond compare, a man who is loved by all who claim Alabama as their alma mater"; and

WHEREAS, in 1966, the University of Alabama National Alumni Association honored Mr. Ferguson with the inaugural Distinguished Alumni award, which "is based on one's loyalty and service to the University and the Association; character and personal life; professional achievement or success in chosen endeavors; and community service on local, state, or national level"; and

WHEREAS, in June 1967, in recognition of Mr. Ferguson's contributions, the Board of Trustees named "the new student center soon to be constructed on the main campus of the University of Alabama as 'Ferguson Student Center' in honor of Mr. Hill Ferguson"; and

WHEREAS, although the working group recognized that "separate but equal" was the law of the land for most of Mr. Ferguson's life, it likewise found that – even after the United States Supreme Court held in 1954 that segregated public schools were unconstitutional – he was a leader on the Board of Trustees when the Board resisted efforts to integrate the University of Alabama and expressed racist views as late as 1963 about the intelligence of African Americans that are inconsistent with the current values of the University of

Alabama System; and

WHEREAS, based upon its findings, the working group recommended that the Board of Trustees amend the name of the Ferguson Student Center to the University of Alabama Student Center; and

WHEREAS, the working group shared its findings and recommendation with Mr. Ferguson's descendants, who recognized that Mr. Ferguson's views were not consistent with the goals and aspirations of the University of Alabama today and respected the working group's recommendation to rename the Ferguson Student Center; and

WHEREAS, the working group and Mr. Ferguson's descendants also agreed that Mr. Ferguson's substantial contributions to the University of Alabama should continue to be honored, albeit in a less prominent way; and

WHEREAS, the working group recommended that the Board of Trustees name the theater inside the University of Alabama Student Center the Ferguson Theater; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Trustees that the name of the Ferguson Student Center is hereby amended to the University of Alabama Student Center;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the theater inside the University of Alabama Center be named the Ferguson Theater.