



## SUNY New Paltz closer to renaming Huguenot buildings after College Council approves move

**Jack Howland**, Poughkeepsie Journal    Published 8:26 p.m. ET Feb. 21, 2019

SUNY New Paltz took another step toward renaming buildings named for slave-owning families following a College Council decision on Friday.

The council voted 4-3 to rename Hasbrouck Complex structures named after the Huguenot families who settled in the region and owned slaves, according to an email sent to the campus community by President Donald Christian. The SUNY Board of Trustees will have to vote on whether to approve the resolution, which Christian said will likely happen this spring or summer.

The council, he said, will begin to consider new names based on recommendations from the committee, which [surveyed](#) (</story/news/local/2018/12/17/suny-new-paltz-asks-alumni-weigh-renaming-buildings/2304394002/>) more than 3,000 students, alumni, faculty, staff and community members, including Huguenot descendants.



The Hasbrouck Dining Hall at SUNY New Paltz, photographed Sept. 27, 2017. Several buildings at the college are named for families of early settlers of New Paltz who were slaveowners. School officials are examining the possibility of removing these names. (Photo 11: Seth Harrison/The Journal News)

Council members have agreed to approve replacement names at its next spring meeting, the date and time of which have yet to be announced.

The survey included more than 20 possible names, from Birch Hall to Spruce Hall to Unity Hall, as well as three possible themes for the buildings — names with local meaning, Hudson Valley flora and personal qualities. SUNY New Paltz doesn't allow buildings to be named after individuals without a substantial financial donation to the school, Christian said.

Christian, who has emphasized the renaming isn't about erasing history, said the school is moving forward with plans to create "a contemplative space and other ways to present a more complete history." A working group of students, faculty and staff is in the process of developing ideas.

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In August 2017, the school began considering renaming the buildings, motivated by the white supremacist Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville that left one dead that same month.

Many students have been vocal in their support of a change, and Christian has also encouraged the move.

Christian said in his email that renaming the buildings is "the right move for the campus at this time," and he regarded it as a "historic moment" for the school.

"I appreciate that College Council members wrestled with this difficult decision as they did," he said, "and am reminded — as the Diversity and Inclusion Council noted in its report — that it is unlikely that we would ever achieve unanimity on such a deeply rooted and complex topic."

If the SUNY Board of Trustees approves the council's decision, the "current names will remain on the buildings for a short while longer to ensure day-to-day functioning and safety measures for residents and the campus community," Christian said. The school also plans to hold a renaming ceremony for the buildings if that decision comes in.

"At the outset, I believed that the New Paltz community could be a role model for civil discourse on a contentious issue," Christian said in the email. "I now know that this process has served the campus community well and raised awareness of important issues of race and racism in our society."

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