

## Summary of the *Ad Hoc* Committee's work on renaming Aycock Hall

### **Introduction**

In October 1961, the East Carolina University Board of Trustees voted to name a newly constructed (1960) men's residence hall in honor of former Governor Charles B. Aycock. In July 2014, the Board of Trustees and Chancellor Ballard began receiving requests from alumni and other community constituents to reexamine the name of this at East Carolina University building.

On November 21, 2014, the Board of Trustees approved the current naming policy for ECU buildings, which includes criteria for renaming university buildings. During the process of drafting the naming policy, all the named buildings on campus were reviewed and Aycock Hall was the sole building designated for further review. Consistent with the naming policy of the ECU Board of Trustees, an ad hoc committee was formed to gather information, collect input from university constituents, and present a recommendation to the Chancellor as to whether or not renaming Aycock Hall is justified and consistent with the University naming policy.

### **Naming Policy (See complete policy in Appendix)**

The key clauses for this decision are 6.1, which indicates that all namings must be consistent with the University's vision, mission, and core values, and 6.3.4, which provides guidance on the issue of an honoree's change in reputation and how that reputation affects the University. The recommendation of the committee is based upon those two clauses.

Section 6.3.5 provides that students, faculty, and staff concerns should be given particular emphasis, thus the decision by this committee to seek input from the campus community via a website with an embedded questions survey as expeditiously as possible (data summarized below).

### **6 Criterion for Renaming**

- 6.1 It shall be the policy of East Carolina University that all namings of campus facilities and activities, are in accordance with the University's vision, mission, and core values.
- 6.2 The decision to change or alter in any way the name of a campus facility or activity rests with the Board of Trustees, acting on the recommendation of the Chancellor. Any person may submit a proposal to the Chancellor requesting that a campus facility or activity be renamed.
- 6.3 Circumstances that may lead to consideration of a name change may include, but shall not be limited to such items as:
  - 6.3.1 the University significantly renovates or adds space;
  - 6.3.2 the University demolishes a facility or discontinues an activity;
  - 6.3.3 an honored person fails to fulfill an agreed upon obligations; or
  - 6.3.4 a benefactor's or honoree's reputation changes substantially so that the continued use of that name may compromise the public trust, dishonor

## Summary of the *Ad Hoc* Committee's work on renaming Aycock Hall

the University's standards, or otherwise be contrary to the best interest of the University. Care must be taken when, with the passage of time, the standards and achievements deemed to justify a naming action may change and observers of a later age may deem those who have conferred a naming honor at an earlier age to have erred. Names should not be altered simply because later observers would have made different judgments.

6.3.5 Student, faculty, and staff concerns should be given particular emphasis.

### **ECU's Mission Statement and Values**

To be a national model for student success, public service and regional transformation, East Carolina University:

- Uses innovative learning strategies and delivery methods to maximize access;
- Prepares students with the knowledge, skills and values to succeed in a global, multicultural society;
- Develops tomorrow's leaders to serve and inspire positive change;
- Discovers new knowledge and innovations to support a thriving future for eastern North Carolina and beyond;
- Transforms health care, promotes wellness, and reduces health disparities; and
- Improves quality of life through cultural enrichment, academics, the arts, and athletics.

We accomplish our mission through education, research, creative activities, and service while being good stewards of the resources entrusted to us.

*Beyond Tomorrow* (2014-2019 ECU Strategic Plan) provides a list of ECU's values:

- **Scholarship:** We will be a diverse community where intellectual freedom, scholarly discipline, and the rigorous pursuit of knowledge thrive.
- **Leadership:** Our students, faculty, and staff will demonstrate leadership in their professions and communities.
- **Service:** We will work toward solutions to the challenges of our region, state, and nation.
- **Discovery:** We will harness the skills and knowledge of our faculty, staff, and students to create a brighter tomorrow for North Carolina.

## Summary of the *Ad Hoc* Committee's work on renaming Aycock Hall

The following sections draw heavily from William Powell's biography of Governor Aycock, quotes are from Connor and Poe's volume of Aycock's collected speeches, and other historical documents (see listing of documents below).

### **Charles B. Aycock, an Excerpted Biography: 1859-1912**

Governor Aycock's legacy is a complex one. Following his graduation from UNC-Chapel Hill in 1880 with a law degree, he became active in Democratic Party politics and an active advocate for the Goldsboro schools. From 1893 to 1897 he was US attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina, but by 1898 he was taking a very active role in Democratic party campaigning and leadership, pushing a white supremacy platform to attract the maximum number of white voters. Following the success of the party in capturing a majority in both houses in the 1898 elections, Aycock worked closely with the legislature to pass an amendment to the constitution imposing poll taxes and literacy tests, with a grandfather clause designed to allow those who could vote in 1867 (and their descendants) to avoid such measures.

Thanks to the popularity of the 1899 amendment, his campaigning on an education platform, and coupled with his oratorical skills, Aycock was elected governor with a sizable majority in 1900. Under his leadership, North Carolina founded more than 1,100 public schools, originated the textbook commission for the state, built 877 libraries, and enacted temperance and child labor laws. His notable accomplishments earned him the title "the Education Governor." Aycock died suddenly in 1912 while addressing the Alabama Educational Association, uttering his famous last word: "education."

### **Naming of Aycock Hall: 1961**

While the committee received no paperwork documenting the discussion about naming Aycock Hall in the early 1960s, a February 1961 letter from Emma Hooper (former English professor) discussing possible names for multiple buildings on campus suggests that the criteria for naming buildings were:

1. The persons named gave long and valuable service to education in general, to many individuals, and to this college in particular,
2. The persons suggested were no longer living or have severed their official connection with the college, and
3. They were or are persons of highest type of character, with reputation beyond reproach.

In August of 1961, Trustee Henry Oglesby suggested to the Board and Chancellor Leo Jenkins that the new boys dormitory be named in honor of the "great educational Governor, Honorable Charles B. Aycock." ECU's Board of Trustees approved this name in October 1961.

## Summary of the *Ad Hoc* Committee's work on renaming Aycock Hall

### **Constituent Opinion Data (as of Noon 12/10/14)**

	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>% Yes for Renaming</b>
<b>Students</b>	696	52
<b>Faculty</b>	258	60
<b>Staff</b>	282	41
<b>Alumni</b>	1180	31
<b>Other</b>	114	33

The website, which included most of the documents listed in the appendix, went live Friday (December 5), and was sent to the ECU Official (all faculty and staff), student, and alumni email lists. The committee was aware that this was not a scientific sampling of the constituents (convenience sample), that locking out multiple submissions was not feasible, and that the timeframe for submission would be short. Thus, the opinions collected were not intended to provide a binding referendum on the issue, but as a means of gathering as much feedback as possible. Ultimately, 2433 total responses were submitted by noon of 12/10/2014 (note that some of the respondents fit multiple categories). The data are contained in the appendix, along with email communications expressing opinions that were prompted by the website.

Alumni and staff expressed by a significant majority the opinion that the Aycock name should be retained; faculty expressed a significant preference for renaming; while the students were closely split. The qualitative responses expressed strong opinions on both sides of the issue.

### **Application of the Policy: 2014**

As detailed above, the policy requires that names chosen are “in accordance with the University’s vision, mission, and core values.” Among the criteria for renaming, the key provision reads, “the honoree's reputation changes substantially so that the continued use of that name may compromise the public trust, dishonor the University's standards, or otherwise be contrary to the best interest of the University.”

Unfortunately, even though he staunchly went against the conservatives in his own party by refusing to totally defund black education, he was still a man whose legacy is also defined by his many expressions of racial intolerance and white supremacy. For example in his 1903 address to the North Carolina Society, he said: “The negro must learn that he may eat rarely of the cooking of equality, but he will always find when he does so that ‘that there is death in every pot.’” Such words were coupled with actions designed to disenfranchise African American voters. In addition to the constitutional amendment he championed, his policies as governor were consistent with his belief in white supremacy. In his 1904 defense of his policies and administration to the Democratic State Convention, he spoke of reducing the allocations of funds to black schools while greatly increasing those to white schools. He finished that section of the speech, “Let us cast away all fear of rivalry with the negro, all apprehension that he shall ever overtake us in the race of life. We are the thoroughbreds and should have no fear of winning the race against a commoner stock.”

## Summary of the *Ad Hoc* Committee's work on renaming Aycock Hall

Ironically, Aycock's own words influenced the committee's evaluation of whether the use of his name on a residence hall is "contrary to the best interest of the University." In a letter to close friend Josephus Daniels, who believed that white supremacy's political dominance in North Carolina had "settled the negro question for all times" Aycock countered that Daniels was mistaken because "every generation will have the problem on their hands and they will have to settle it for themselves." Aycock is correct; in this new generation, we are not in the position to place judgment on the past, but we are certainly in a position to reconsider and "settle" for ourselves how we move forward in our future.

It is the committee's view that the contemporary association of white supremacy with Governor Aycock has changed his reputation substantially since 1961, when he was posthumously honored with the naming of an ECU residence hall. The decision to honor an individual implies that the values and reputation of that individual are representative of the values the institution also holds. That growing awareness of Governor Aycock's advocacy of white supremacy, his belief that African Americans were inherently inferior to the white race, and his actions to advance those beliefs, must be contrasted with the values stated in ECU's mission and values statement. Such a mismatch prompted the June 2014 removal of the Aycock name from a residential hall at Duke University, following a student government resolution. Currently, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and University of North Carolina-Greensboro are also considering similar renamings. Given that since the original naming, ECU has grown in its mission of inclusiveness, it is time for this institution, through the symbolic nature of the people it chooses to honor with building names, to fully reflect a future that is both global and diverse. To quote what were nearly Aycock's last words (from his speech on Universal Education, he died minutes after delivering these words), "Oh, my friends, I thank God Almighty, who is no respecter of persons, that you cannot get the best for your boy and your girl until you are ready to give the best to my boy and my girl." Yes, Aycock's legacy is complex, hence the need to consider both sides of this man's career, a career that does not consistently reflect ECU's current mission and values of inclusiveness and diversity.

### **Recommendation**

Following review of the documents listed below and the feedback received via the website, the committee recommends that East Carolina University rename Aycock Hall. We believe the honoree's reputation has changed substantially so that the continued use of that name dishonors the University's standards and is contrary to the best interest of the University in that it prevents the University from fostering a "diverse community where intellectual freedom, scholarly discipline, and the rigorous pursuit of knowledge thrive" for students, staff, and faculty, and does not reflect our intolerance of such racist actions.

## Summary of the *Ad Hoc* Committee's work on renaming Aycock Hall

### **Committee Members**

Andrew Morehead, Jr., Faculty Member, Chair of the Committee

Reginald Watson, Faculty Member

Janae Brown, Student

Jake Srednicki, Student

Lamont Lowery, Staff

Mary Schiller, Staff

Paul Zigas, Rep. of the University Attorney's Office

Griffin Lamb, University Advancement

Brenda Myrick, Alumnus

E. Neal Crawford, Alumnus

## Summary of the *Ad Hoc* Committee's work on renaming Aycock Hall

### Documents Reviewed

Powell, W. S. "Aycock, Charles Brantley." *The Dictionary of North Carolina Biography. Volume 1:A-C*. The University of North Carolina Press Chapel Hill. (1979): 73-75.

Steelman, J. F. "Aycock, Charles Brantley." <http://www.anb.org/articles/05/05-00948.html>. American National Biography Online, 2000.

Connor, R. D. W. and Poe, C. *The life and speeches of Charles Brantley Aycock*. Garden City, N. Y., Doubleday, Page & Co., 1912.

Hamilton, J. G. de Roulhac. "Chapter XIV: White Supremacy." *History of North Carolina. Volume III: North Carolina Since 1860*. Chicago and New York, Lewis Publishing Co. (1919): 279-315.

Anderson, E. "The Black Second." *Race and Politics in North Carolina 1872-1901*. Baton Rouge and London, Louisiana State University Press. (1981): 252-279.

Umfleet, L. "The Wilmington Race riot – 1898." <http://ncpedia.org/history/cw-1900/wilmington-race-riot>. NC Office of Archives and History, 2010.

Zipf, K. L. "Wilmington 1898: Politics of a Massacre." <http://core.ecu.edu/umc/wilmington>. Greenville, NC. 2007.

"1898 Wilmington Race Riot — Final Report." *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission*. North Carolina Office of Archives & History. 2006.

Tyson, T. B. "Timothy B. Tyson: Response on Gov. Aycock's legacy." <http://www.ashevilleplanet.com/opinion/2961-timothy-b-tyson-response-on-gov-aycocks-legacy>. Asheville, NC. 2013.

Cecelski, D. S. and Tyson, T. B. "Hugh MacRae at Invershiel." <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/morton/index.php/essays/hugh-macrae-at-invershiel/>. Chapel Hill, NC. 2010.

A variety of newspaper clippings, letters, and other documents provided by John Tucker, University Historian and the library archivists of ECU. Such documents focused on the naming process in 1961 and dedication of Aycock Hall the subsequent year, the news stories and obituaries from his death in 1912, and his visit to speak at ECTTS commencement in 1910.

The committee also reviewed the letters of request for renaming and additional articles from *The Herald Sun*, *The Chronicle*, *Inside Higher Education*, *Diversity, Inc.* and *The Daily Reflector*.

## Summary of the *Ad Hoc* Committee's work on renaming Aycock Hall

### Appendices

ECU Board of Trustees Naming Policy (approved 11/21/2014)

Feedback collected from [www.ecu.edu/aycock](http://www.ecu.edu/aycock) website

Correspondence received by the committee