

**BOARD OF REGENTS**  
EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

SECTION: D
DATE:
December 10, 2020

**RECOMMENDATION**

**BUILDING NAMING APPROVAL  
RENAMING OF COMMUNICATION, MEDIA, AND THEATRE ARTS BUILDING**

**ACTION REQUESTED**

In accordance with Board of Regents Policy 05.12, it is recommended that the Board of Regents rename the Daniel L. Quirk, Jr. Building the “Judy Sturgis Hill Building” in honor of Judy Sturgis Hill, a former Associate Professor of Communication, Media, and Theatre Arts who had a lengthy and distinguished history as an Eastern Michigan University student and faculty member.

**STAFF SUMMARY**

The Daniel L. Quirk, Jr. Building has been the home of The School of Communication, Media & Theatre Arts (CMTA) since its construction in 1958. The Quirk Theatre is one of the two theatres located in the Quirk Building.

In September 2020, Ypsilanti historian and EMU alumnus Matthew Siegfried published evidence of Daniel L. Quirk’s leadership in the production and performance of Black Face Theatre in which white performers mocked and ridiculed African American culture while performing in blackface makeup. This is not consistent with the values of EMU and our faculty, staff, and students who reside in the building and perform in the theatre.

Shortly thereafter, President Smith formed a committee to address the historical legacy of the Quirk Building and Quirk Theatre. The committee included the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences (CAS), the Director of the School of Communication, Media, and Theatre Arts (CMTA), CMTA faculty and staff, two CMTA emeritus faculty, a representative from the EMU Foundation, a CMTA alumnus, and a member of the Quirk family.

The Committee undertook an extensive process that was guided by the processes that other institutions of higher education have followed when faced with similar decisions. Among other steps, the University in October 2020 issued a call on behalf of the Committee to the faculty and staff of EMU, and to all current students, emeritus faculty, alumni and donors of CMTA, for suggestions to rename the building and theatre. The Committee received suggestions from 344 individuals containing approximately 124 suggested names for the building and 138 suggested names for the theatre.

The Committee prepared a thorough and detailed report, which is attached to this Recommendation. Using the criteria and processes outlined in the report, the Committee recommended that the building be renamed the “Judy Sturgis Hill Building”. Sturgis Hill served in many roles on campus prior to passing away in January 2019. In addition to meeting the criteria outlined in the Committee’s report, Sturgis Hill represents the aspirational characteristics for which CMTA strives. She was an EMU student, a member of the national championship Forensics team, a student activist on campus during the Civil Rights struggles, a resident hall adviser, a graduate assistant, a part-time lecturer, a recipient of a King-Chavez-Parks fellowship, a faculty member, a faculty in-residence (living in the First Year residence hall for a number of years to support students in their transition to college life), the Director of Diversity programs, the interim Director of Office of Affirmative Action, the co-chair of the Martin L. King, Jr. planning committee from its inception, and co-Director of the Summer Institute for the Arts and Sciences. Sturgis Hill was also EMU’s First National Forensics Champion, a recipient of the Alumni Teaching Excellence Award, a chosen faculty member to present in the Last Lecture Series, and a recipient of EMU’s Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award. Importantly, Sturgis Hill also has a direct link to the disciplines housed inside the building.

The recommendation to rename the building the “Judy Sturgis Hill Building” was reviewed and approved by the University Naming Committee pursuant to Board Policy 05.12.

The Committee also received numerous suggestions for renaming the theatre. After much thoughtful discussion, the Committee determined it was difficult to single out one person when so many individuals have contributed to the success and history of the theatre. The Committee therefore recommended renaming the theatre the “Legacy Theatre”. That recommendation is not subject to Board Policy 05.12, and will be acted upon by the President.

### **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no expense-related implications related to this renaming, although there will be small expenses incurred to create and install new signage to reflect the renaming.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATION**

The proposed Board action has been reviewed and is recommended for Board approval, with an effective date of February 1, 2021.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
University Executive Officer

December 10, 2020  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Quirk Committee's  
Report & Recommendations  
November 23, 2020**

**Overview**

This report contains three main sections:

1. The rationale to remove the name of Daniel L. Quirk Jr. from the Building & Theatre
2. The process to solicit and evaluate names for the Building & Theatre
3. The final recommendations of the Quirk Committee

**I. Decision to remove the name of Daniel L. Quirk, Jr. from the Building & Theatre**

In late August 2020 local historian Mathew Siegfried published evidence, in the form of photo images and written documents, of Daniel L. Quirk's leadership in the production and performance of Minstrel Shows. Quirk's association with minstrelsy appears to have been an effort to replicate the minstrel shows of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. These shows were filled with mythological interpretations of plantation slave life. They were designed to entertain through demeaning stereotypes, base distortions of African American speech and cultural traditions, and crude racist humor.

Other institutions of higher education have been faced with similar decision-making processes when the eponym of a building/structure is found to have engaged in behaviors that do not reflect the values and mission of the institution. After reviewing a number of processes that other institutions followed to inform their decision making, this committee adapted Yale and Stanford Universities' principles and procedures to guide our decision-making. ([https://president.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/CEPR\\_FINAL\\_12-2-16.pdf](https://president.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/CEPR_FINAL_12-2-16.pdf) and <https://campusnames.stanford.edu/renaming-principles/>)

**Assessment of Honoree's Actions and Behavior**

**1. Exact nature of the honoree's offensive actions and behavior**

*Daniel L. Quirk, Jr. had some level of leadership (producing/directing) in amateur minstrel shows modeled after the white minstrels of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He also performed in and hosted blackface events. These shows and events created and reinforced demeaning stereotypes of African Americans.*

**2. Strength and clarity of historical evidence**

*On his Facebook page Matthew Siegfried shared three photographs: one of Daniel L. Quirk Jr. in blackface; one of a minstrel company all in blackface, with most of the characters appearing to be female; and one that could be of a minstrel company (no one in the photo appears to be in blackface).*

*There are also four news clippings. The first clipping refers to a minstrel show with performances on May 15 and 16 1894 in Cleary College Hall. The Detroit Free Press, May 20, 1894, identifies Daniel L Quirk Jr. as the "manager of the enterprise". The*

*second clipping, from the Ypsilanti Commercial, May 4, 1894, is an announcement of what is likely the same show. Both articles likely refer to the predominantly female company depicted in the photograph referenced above.*

*A third clipping is from the Ann Arbor Argus, May 13, 1898, announcing a performance to be given in the opera house by the University Minstrels under the management of Daniel L. Quirk, Jr. Finally, a fourth clipping from the Ann Arbor Democrat, August 27, 1897, announces a performance of a Jubilee to be presented on September 1 by the ladies of the choir chapter of St. Luke's church for which Daniel L Quirk will "blacken up". [It should be noted that a Jubilee was not part of the original minstrel shows. A Jubilee was a choral performance of spirituals added to some minstrels that were performed by all black companies following the Civil War.]*

*Research credit for the photos and clips: Matt Siegfried*

### **3. The person's behavior and public persona.**

***The centrality of the behavior to a person's life.*** *There is considerable historic evidence that Quirk was deeply committed to theatrical performance. In addition to the performances referenced above he was the founder of the Ypsilanti Players. He managed and directed the Players for fifteen years beginning in 1915. He also served as manager of the Ypsilanti Opera House and led the University of Michigan summer theatre for 1938 to 1943. Though his theatrical work was considerable it could be described as an avocation. His primary work involved management and leadership of several family business enterprises.*

***Conventionality of the behavior at the time of the person's involvement.*** *While most major professional minstrel companies were fading by the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, amateur companies like those promoted by Daniel L. Quirk Jr. kept the tradition alive. The popularity of these amateur performances continued through the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Judging from the wording of the news articles cited above, minstrel shows could be described as conventional for the time. Additionally, evidence suggests that participants in the shows that Quirk managed were respected members of the community.*

***Roles and status of the person in the broad community.*** *There is considerable evidence indicating that Quirk was respected as a community and corporate leader. He served with the Red Cross in France during WW I. He served as mayor of Ypsilanti and contributed his home and gardens to the City of Ypsilanti. There is also some evidence that he served as Director of the Student Aid Corporation for Michigan Normal College.*

***Roles and status of honoree in identifiable community segments.*** *A history of the Ypsilanti Players speaks of Quirk with great admiration. "Ypsilanti Gleanings" Winter 2013*

**Concept of principal legacy in community and segments.** Quirk's principle legacy could be described as bifurcated. He was a respected community and corporate leader. He was instrumental in establishing theatrical endeavors.

**Concept of exceptionality (the degree to which the person actively promoted the offensive actions).** The dates of the newspaper clips that describe his participation in minstrel shows span 1894 to 1898. So during those years his attitude toward his work could be described as exceptional. The committee found no record of any minstrelsy involving the Ypsilanti Players or other theatrical endeavors for the remainder of his life.

#### **4. Relationship of the individual with the university.**

**Person's involvement in instruction, polity and/or administration.** The committee's research into Daniel L. Quirk's involvement in instruction, polity and/or administration found that Quirk served at least two years as Director, Student Aid Corporation at the request of the president of Michigan Normal College. The exact nature of the work is not known at this time

**Financial contributions to the university.** There is no record of Quirk making financial contributions to Michigan Normal College or Eastern Michigan University. Following his death members of his family contributed \$700 toward the commissioning of his portrait and a commemorative inscription to be installed in the building.

**University's knowledge of and the person's actions at the time or recognition.** Several documents found in the EMU archives refer to the construction and dedication of the Quirk Dramatic Arts Building. All of the documents state that the decision to name the building was based entirely on Quirk's founding and leadership of the Ypsilanti Players. The level of knowledge of his work with minstrelsy at the time of the naming of the building is unknown. If indeed his direct involvement did not extend much beyond 1898 it is possible that there was little awareness on the part of the university in 1958. There are, however, references to personnel connected with Michigan Normal College participating in the minstrels that Quirk managed so there could have been institutional knowledge though it probably would have been considered unexceptional at the time.

**The extent to which the behavior affects the University's core mission.** The committee believes that knowledge of the images and published information about Quirk's involvement in minstrelsy would negatively impact the ability of EMU students, faculty and staff, particularly those involved in the study and production of theatre to fully and effectively participate in the mission of the University.

#### **Conclusion**

Quirk's principle legacy could be described as bifurcated. He was a respected community and corporate leader. He was instrumental in establishing theatrical endeavors. This legacy too is bifurcated. As founder and leader of the Ypsilanti Players he made significant positive contributions to the cultural life of the city. However, as a promoter and performer in blackface

minstrels he contributed to the shameful history of racism in the U.S. Like all human forms of expression theatre can affirm the most positive traits--, empathy, understanding, joyfulness, compassion, confidence, and beauty. Theatre also has the capacity to subvert these traits in the harshest and most exploitative ways.

Regardless of motivation, Daniel L. Quirk, Jr.'s promotion of blackface performance is not consistent with the beliefs, values, and mission of EMU and the School of Communication, Media & Theatre Arts. EMU and CMTA stand for diversity, inclusion and creating safe and supportive spaces for all students. This committee has concluded that knowledge of the images and published information about Quirk's involvement in minstrelsy negatively impacts the ability of EMU students, faculty and staff, particularly those involved in the study and production of theatre, to fully and effectively participate in the mission and values of the University. It is therefore appropriate to remove the name Quirk from the building and the theatre.

## **II. Process for Renaming the Building**

Having determined that the Quirk name be removed from the building, the committee was faced with establishing appropriate methods and principles to be used in establishing a new name.

A Call for Suggestions to rename the building and the theatre was sent to the faculty and staff of EMU, and to all current students, emeritus faculty, alumni and donors of CMTA. The call prompted 344 individuals to submit suggestions that generated approximately 124 names for the building and 138 names for the theatre when duplicative suggestions were removed.

The committee established a rubric by which to evaluate the suggestions. The members were in agreement that when evaluating suggestions with a person's name that meet the following criteria be met:

1. That the person have a direct relationship with Eastern Michigan University
2. That the person have a direct relationship with the School of Communication, Media & Theatre Arts
3. For the Theatre names, that the person also have a direct relationship with Theatre and
4. That the person reflects the values of EMU and CMTA.

For suggestions that were conceptual or functional only the fourth criterion was used.

Using the above criteria, the list of 124 building names was narrowed to 28 names and the list of 138 theatre names was narrowed to 19 names. A number of individuals' names appeared on the lists. This prompted the committee members to discuss the inequitable representation of women and people of color on University buildings and the need for all students to see themselves included within the structures of EMU. It is through this lens of social justice,

inclusivity and equality that this committee decided to include the criteria that if the building or theatre were to be named for an individual that individual be a “person of color”. After applying this criterion, the list of names for the building was narrowed to six names and the list of names for the Theatre was narrowed to eight names.

The remaining names for the building and theatre fell into three distinct categories: identifying the building/theatre by its function, using the name of a person (current or historical), and providing a conceptual name that is aspirational/inclusive. The committee discussed the advantages and disadvantages of each one of these categories

***Identifying the building/theatre by its function.*** Names in this category included suggestions such as CMTA Building and EMU Theatre.

*Advantages:*

- Direct and specific; no ambiguity
- Highly descriptive and informational
- Inclusive (no identity would be excluded)
- Allows for donor naming in the future, if desired and available

*Disadvantages:*

- Does not directly address the reason for the name change
- Does not project the values, spirit or culture within the building

***Using the name of a person.*** A significant number of people’s names were suggested. As stated in the criteria, the committee did not move forward in the process any name that did not identify with EMU and CMTA. Since the building only houses CMTA, it was important to members of the committee that if the building/theatre were named after a person that the honoree have a direct link to the disciplines housed inside the building. The committee also felt strongly that the honoree would have to be easily identified with qualities promoting social justice and racial equality.

*Advantages:*

- Clearly identifies the University with the values associated with the person.
- Fulfills both functions of a building name by communicating historical information and conferring honor.
- Potentially increases the diversity of the individuals who are recognized on the University buildings.

*Disadvantages:*

- Fixes the historical information and recognition to the specific time, place and actions of the person.
- Limits the time and scope of the public awareness of the person’s actions. With the exception of very well known persons the relevance of a single name fades over time. In a few years, most people will not know the identities that the person on the name of the building represents.

- Invites the examination of the totality of a person’s life and in so doing can diminish the importance of specific actions or actions.

***Providing a name that is aspirational/inclusive.*** Names in this category consisted of abstract words that express the values, vision, and inclusiveness of EMU and CMTA.

*Advantages:*

- Clearly identifies University/CMTA with values associated with selected word or words.
- Offers potentially the greatest degree of inclusivity. All identities would feel represented.
- Focuses attention on addressing injustices without limiting factors of time or place.
- Allows the opportunity to have ongoing events and messaging that honors different individuals over the span of years.

*Disadvantage:*

- Words and phrases have multiple meanings that will vary over time, place, and individual application.
- Some may interpret using a concept as a building/theatre name as not confronting/avoiding racial inequities and injustices.
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The committee reviewed the final lists of names taking into consideration the advantages and disadvantages of the three different types of names that could be chosen.

### **III. Recommendations**

#### **A. Recommendation for the Building**

The committee was initially divided on the topic of naming the building after a person. Some members argued that choosing a person’s name would only have meaning in the moment and that meaning would be lost as time passes. Others felt strongly that now is the time to address historic and current systemic racism on EMU’s campus. A positive step in that direction would be to recognize a person of color and particularly a Black person. This discussion moved from the general idea to the specific attributes of the one person that met all the criteria for the building, Judy Sturgis Hill.

In addition to meeting the criteria, Sturgis Hill represents the aspirational characteristics that CMTA strives for. As one member commented, Sturgis Hill represents love, generosity of spirit, and compassion for the struggles of students. She was an EMU student, a member of the national championship Forensics team, a student activist on campus during the Civil Rights struggles, a resident hall adviser, a graduate assistant, a part-time lecturer, a recipient of a King-Chavez-Parks fellowship, a faculty member, a faculty in-residence (living in the First Year residence hall for a number of years to support students in their transition to college life), the Director of Diversity programs (Student Affairs), the interim Director of Office of Affirmative Action, the co-chair of the Martin L. King, Jr. planning committee from its inception, and co-Director of the Summer Institute for the Arts and Sciences. Sturgis Hill was also EMU’s First National Forensics Champion, a recipient of the Alumni Teaching Excellence Award, a chosen



faculty member to present in the Last Lecture Series, and a recipient of EMU's Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award. Sturgis Hill fostered meaningful dialogues among people. She brought people together to share their lived experiences, and to deepen everyone's understanding of the world. Sturgis Hill believed in welcoming everyone regardless of difference – she firmly believed that people have more similarities than differences and that we should seek to include others first, not exclude. She is known for saying that we should love and embrace all people – plant the seed of love and pay it forward. Sturgis Hill could not walk across campus without students, staff and faculty members stopping her for a hug. She believed that you can change the world one heart at a time. It is for all of these qualities that Judy Sturgis Hill's name is not only a name but also a spirit to inspire generations to come and an embodiment of the qualities that the campus community aspires to.

**Therefore, the committee unanimously recommends the Building be named:  
Judy Sturgis Hill**

#### **B. Recommendation for the Theatre**

Like the suggestions received for the building, the committee received numerous suggestions of individuals' names for the theatre. Many of the names were beloved faculty members or alumni who have achieved success in their professional careers. After much thoughtful discussion of these individuals, it became difficult to single out one person when so many individuals have contributed to the success and history of the theatre. The discussion turned to the need to honor those who we know have contributed to the legacy of EMU Theatre and to commit to researching figures of whose contributions we do not know.

**Therefore, the committee unanimously recommends the Theatre be named:  
Legacy Theatre**

#### **C. Other recommendations**

CMTA and EMU may want to find ways to acknowledge, celebrate and honor many of the people whose names were put forth for the building and theatre, especially our alumni. We should also develop a system/process to discover and celebrate other alumni who have made significant accomplishments or have powerful personal stories, especially from the early years of EMU.

CMTA may want to share the message/philosophy of Judy Sturgis Hill (eg. in the building, on the website) so that the renaming is seen not simply as a moment in time but as a legacy that inspires faculty, staff and students for years to come.

EMU may want to acknowledge racist past practices and continue to examine current practices in terms of our stated commitments to inclusion and social justice.

Ypsilanti and Eastern Michigan University have an expansive Black history. EMU may want to explore ways to elevate and promote this history.

EMU may want to reconstitute the Naming committee to develop principles and procedures going forward.