

ACTION ITEM #2

Facilities Names Recommendation – WSU Pullman “Elson S. Floyd Cultural Center” (Olivia Yang)

March 25, 2016

TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF REGENTS

SUBJECT: WSU Pullman Facilities Names Recommendation, Elson S. Floyd Cultural Center

PROPOSED: That the Board of Regents approve the recommendation to name the proposed WSU Pullman Cultural Building, the “Elson S. Floyd Cultural Center.”

SUBMITTED BY: Daniel J. Bernardo, Interim President

**SUPPORTING
INFORMATION:**

The University Administration proposes that the future WSU Pullman, Cultural Building be named in honor of the late WSU President Elson S. Floyd and be named the “Elson S. Floyd Cultural Center.” As stated by the Cultural Building Steering Committee (see attached memo), “This building is important and should bear the name of Dr. Elson Floyd because as the iconic gateway building to the university, it gives the campus community the opportunity to say ‘we see you,’ ‘your life mattered’ and ‘your legacy will live on.’ The proposed Elson S. Floyd Cultural Center will serve as a recognition and symbol of the historical contributions of Dr. Floyd to WSU’s diversity legacy.” “Undoubtedly the legacy of Dr. Elson S. Floyd will be remembered as reaching many corners of the state and crossing many national boundaries. Of particular note was his demonstrated commitment to diversity, students, and social justice. Washington State University’s diverse student enrollment is one of the fastest growing in the Northwest in large part to Dr. Floyd’s commitment and vision. He was an innovative and influential leader and was a nationally respected voice for affordable, accessible higher education. Dr. Floyd committed his entire career to expanding opportunities for all.”

Appended at Attachment A is the memo from the Building Steering Committee.



Memorandum

TO: Daniel Bernardo, President

FROM: Steering Committee

DATE: 11/20/15

SUBJECT: Approval of Building Name

BUILDING SIGNIFICANCE

When someone leaves this world too soon, there are many regrets on missed opportunities to articulate what that individual meant to us. This is the sentiment of many in the WSU community with respect to President Elson S. Floyd. This building is important and should bear the name of Dr. Elson Floyd because as the iconic gateway building to the university, it gives the campus community the opportunity to say “we see you”, “your life mattered” and “your legacy will live on.” The proposed **Elson S. Floyd Cultural Center** will serve as a recognition and symbol of the historical contributions of Dr. Floyd to WSU’s diversity legacy.

Consistent with the proposal approved by the Board of Regents for the Design and Construction of this new Multi-cultural Center, the Steering Committee has embarked on a journey to design a culturally responsive, inclusive space on campus that educates and celebrates the multicultural past, present and future of Washington State University. As a Land Grant institution, this building will aid WSU’s efforts to fulfill its democratic mandate for openness, accessibility, and service to the people of the state of Washington. The Committee trusts that this new building will serve as a critical resource to support the advancement of new and returning students and families, while also serving as a center for cultural programming, social justice outreach, and community engagement. Not only is the building a lens of how to review the past, it also signals to WSU students how they can leverage their education to create dynamic change for a promising future. As the students indicated to the Board of Regents during their petition in establishing such a cultural center “we believe that such a center would advance the educational development of all students and would be a welcome addition to the WSU campus”. Further, in the document presented to the Regents “a state of the art and highly visible facility makes a definite statement of WSU’s pride as a land grant institution that welcomes and serves a diverse student population and prepares all students to be well-rounded and engaged citizens, both locally and globally”.

The design of the building has been guided by a hand drawn illustration of President Floyd's vision that he shared with the Steering Committee in our final meeting with him before his untimely death. Although he is no longer with us, there is not a meeting, discussion or detail about this building that the Steering Committee does not try to interpret and ask ourselves "what would Elson want?" This building is the manifestation of his vision for the future of WSU, and was one of his last initiatives as President. As Elson illustrated via his drawing, the building has four articulate areas to share distinct identities-- Native American, African-American, Asian American/Pacific Islander and Chicano/Latino. Unique on this campus, this iconic building will embody the essence of intersecting many identities and diverse perspectives that embody our Cougar nation. The design of this new multi-cultural building layout intentionally reinforces the idea of joining a transformational journey both in terms of a physical and symbolical experience. In essence the building fosters the concepts of connectedness, community, and social justice much of what Dr. Elson S. Floyd represented as WSU's 10th University President.

LEGACY MATTERS

Undoubtedly the legacy of Dr. Elson S. Floyd will be remembered as reaching many corners of the state and crossing many national boundaries. Of particular note was his demonstrated commitment to diversity, students, and social justice. Washington State University's diverse student enrollment is one of the fastest growing in the Northwest in large part to Dr. Floyd's commitment and vision. He was an innovative and influential leader and was a nationally respected voice for affordable, accessible higher education. Dr. Floyd committed his entire career to expanding opportunities for all.

As one student leader indicated on what Dr. Floyd meant to her:

"Dr. Elson Floyd had an enormous impact on students. Being the first African American president of three different universities, he demonstrated to students of color that being a part of an underrepresented population is a responsibility, and he carried that responsibility with pride and dignity. He led by example, allowing all students to feel comfortable and confident in their pursuit of higher education. Everything he did, everything he stood for, and everything he worked for was always in favor of the students. His accomplishments as the first African American president of Washington State University have changed the culture to allow for an inclusive environment where everyone can be a part of the Cougar family. Dedicating this monumental building to Dr. Floyd allows for past, present, and future generations to understand the impact that President Floyd had and the impacts that will last forever. President Floyd was a friend to students, faculty, family, and alumni alike. His presence will be so greatly missed, but remembering him and his accomplishments through this monumental building is just a small way we can say 'Thank You'."

When Dr. Floyd selected the site for this new building at the entrance of campus, he symbolically placed diversity at the gateway to the WSU experience. Recognizing that everyone needs a place to belong, this location serves as a welcoming space to All; the building itself is an invitation to view WSU as a place to learn, engage, and develop global leaders. This iconic building positions WSU as a leader in higher education and diversity, and deserves to bear the name of one of the most iconic national leaders in higher education and diversity, WSU's 10th President, Dr. Elson S. Floyd.