



December 9, 2022

Dear President Neufeldt,

In September 2021, you charged a taskforce to come together via an inclusive and deliberative process to guide our university in the examination of CSUSM's connection to Senator William A. Craven, particularly as it relates to the naming of Craven Hall and location of the bust of Senator Craven. In the report, which we respectfully submit today, we describe our findings, process, and final recommendation. This letter serves to provide a high-level overview of our report.

The Taskforce Process

In fall 2021, we began our efforts with the support and guidance of the San Diego-based National Conflict Resolution Center experts who helped us establish a common ground of respect and commitment to objective listening and dialogue that would guide all subsequent discussions, meetings, and public sessions. This was key as we knew we would receive many different opinions on the question of Craven Hall and Senator Craven's legacy, many of them deeply and powerfully felt. Given that this is both an emotional and intellectual issue with different interpretations and understanding across communities and individuals, we wanted to model the civil, respectful and constructive dialogue and practices that might be employed in the future – whether at CSUSM, in the California State University (CSU) system or across higher education.

With the common groundwork laid, the Taskforce met weekly throughout the 2021-22 academic year. These meetings afforded the opportunity for members to become familiar with and discuss the core concepts related to the history of Senator Craven's role in the founding of CSUSM; the history of the naming controversy; and the record of materials in CSUSM's digital collection. Examples of historical materials examined include the original naming nomination submitted to the CSU Board of Trustees, correspondence between Senator Craven and CSUSM leaders and faculty, historic newspaper articles, audio recordings of a legislative committee hearing on border issues, CSUSM Academic Senate archived documents, and documents archived in the CSUSM University Library along with other historical resources and documents located by staff.

Throughout the process, the Taskforce heard first-hand accounts and presentations from people and groups with varying points of view. These included those who were directly involved in the controversy in 1993-94, those not directly involved but who feel personally affected by the naming of the building/location of the bust, and those - including family, close friends and former colleagues - who had warm memories and positive experiences of Senator Craven. In addition to these presentations, 6 public comment and listening sessions were offered to CSUSM faculty, staff, current students, alumni, and community members to share perspectives, personal accounts and other insights. The Taskforce co-chairs were invited to a listening session convened by members of CSUSM's Latin-x community and also accepted continuous feedback via email and phone. Approximately 90 messages/emails in total were received sharing a diversity of perspectives.

Following deliberative discussion and analysis of all we discovered, heard, read and learned, we completed a draft report in May 2022. Via the process of writing and reviewing the draft report, additional questions were raised by Taskforce members which we undertook to research and address. A revised draft report was then shared with the Taskforce in August 2022. Subsequently, in response to your invitation for a meeting, Taskforce members gathered in late August 2022 to share their thoughts and analyses with you. As a result of that discussion, we continued our work to formulate a final recommendation.

Findings

The Taskforce confirms that Senator Craven's relationship to CSUSM is complex and multilayered. As with all human lives, Senator Craven's life contained contradictions and the interpretations of the legacies he left behind vary among individuals. Within the report you will find, based on our work as outlined above, a summary and background on the life of Senator Craven along with a thorough review and timeline of the events that led to the controversy surrounding the naming of Craven Hall, both in 1993-94 and in 2021-22.

A decorated military veteran and public servant for over 40 years, there is no doubt that among Senator Craven's many accomplishments, the creation of CSUSM—of which he was instrumental in establishing—was one of his crowning career achievements. Indeed, without Senator Craven's dedicated leadership and support over many decades, it is highly doubtful that a CSU campus would be located in North San Diego County.

While acknowledging this outstanding legacy which has touched thousands of lives and communities, the Taskforce overwhelmingly found that the Senator's anti-immigrant and anti-Latinx statements and actions in the early 1990s along with his unwillingness to apologize or seek understanding of the harm he caused individuals and populations connected to CSUSM, do not align with the mission, vision and values of CSUSM today and the students we serve.

Although a dissenting opinion is expressed in our report, the Taskforce by and large agrees that it is insufficient that Senator Craven may not have meant what he said or misspoke. We recognize that words and symbols matter, and that the indignities leveled at the Latinx immigrant communities demonstrate a lack of awareness around matters of social class along with those factors comprising social class such as colorism and indigeneity, socio-economic status and access to resources – factors which deeply affect the lives and possibilities of immigrant and minoritized communities. These are factors which CSUSM strives to overcome every day in our mission of social mobility and student success. Additionally, in the early 1990s, CSUSM faculty and staff's concerns with Senator Craven's remarks were covered in the media and they received an onslaught of public criticism for their preoccupation with "multiculturalism" and "political correctness." This created a chilling effect. Also noteworthy, the Taskforce found no evidence of a formal administrative process for reviewing the name of the building, creating a lack of access for all concerns and voices to be heard and considered.

Thus, when all the evidence and historical record are brought to bear, we recognize that the symbol of Senator Craven's name on Craven Hall (as well as his likeness on display in the building's lobby via the bust) extends beyond his own virtues and vices to become principally emblematic to so many, of anti-immigrant and anti-Latinx/Hispanic oppression and injustice that was not only prevalent in the era of the original controversy but continues to garner mainstream acceptance today.

Recommendation

As living, breathing institutions, universities – particularly public universities such as CSUSM – have an ongoing obligation to evolve to serve current and future student populations and communities. As stewards of the intergenerational project that is this university and in addressing the question of Craven Hall, we prioritize the alignment of the building's name with our stated mission and vision of student success, social mobility, inclusive excellence, academic excellence and community engagement, amongst other values. Symbols matter and the persistent controversy over Senator Craven's name at CSUSM is evidence of that.

Thus, on behalf of the Taskforce, we respectfully submit our report with the recommendation that Craven Hall be renamed through a clear process consistent with the values of CSUSM. In addition, we recommend that Senator Craven's relationship with CSUSM be appropriately memorialized and contextualized within a larger historical documentation of the campus in an appropriate on-campus location that would also serve as the new home of the bust of Senator Craven.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve CSUSM and our region. It has been an honor to be a part of this important work.

Sincerely,

Dr. Elizabeth Matthews, Professor of Political Science and Global Studies
and Special Assistant to the Provost
Dr. Patricia L. Prado-Olmos, Chief Community Engagement Officer
Taskforce co-chairs