

## SUNY New Paltz votes to rename buildings that have ties to slave owners

By Rachel Ettlinger / For the Times Herald-Record

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NEW PALTZ — After more than a year of debate, SUNY New Paltz President Donald P. Christian said the college is “not erasing history” by renaming six buildings on campus.

By a 4-3 vote on Thursday, the College Council, a group of alumni that reviews major campus plans, decided to rename the Hasbrouck Complex buildings that include five residences and a dining hall because of the namesake families’ history with slavery, Christian said.

Bevier Hall, Crispell Hall, Deyo Hall, DuBois Hall, Hasbrouck Dining Hall and Lefevre Hall were named after original Huguenot settlers in New Paltz who owned slaves.

“I’m so pleased with this forward-looking outcome,” Christian said in a statement to the campus and community. “It is the right move for the campus at this time, as we strive to be a leader in meeting the educational needs of all New Yorkers.”

If approved by the SUNY Board of Trustees in the spring or early summer, the buildings will bear new names chosen by a study group charged with providing recommendations to the school, Christian said.

Devoted to interpreting and preserving local history, the Historic Huguenot Street organization had representatives attend forums hosted by the college and provided historical insight as university officials debated the subject, said Liselle LaFrance, executive director.

“HHS appreciated being included in the process initiated by President Donald Christian to examine the building names on campus, and HHS supports the campus’ commitment to serving and celebrating its diverse student body,” a statement from the HSS board and staff said. “Clearly SUNY New Paltz has made what it believes to be the best decision of how to make this happen.”

Freshman Samantha Davidson, from Westchester County, said on Friday that the name change was a good move and she supported it, but she predicted there will be upset following the decision.

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“I think it’s an interesting position that they’re taking,” Davidson said. “I think it’s the right thing to do; I just think it might receive some community blowback.”

Joel Gupta, a sophomore from Poughkeepsie who had just walked out of the Hasbrouck Complex, said he disagreed with the change.

"It's like you're deleting a part of history," Gupta said. "... If we're talking about they're owning slaves and everything, that's America's history."

As an anthropology student, Ravenna Coffey, a second-year student from Long Island, said she didn't expect the decision to go the way it did.

"I support it being renamed," Coffey said. "I'm surprised because last year it seemed like it wasn't going to happen, so I was mostly surprised when I heard the news."

Expressing pride over the students, employees and alumni engagement in the dialogue, Christian said he was thankful for input the university received from both on and off campus.