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SUNY New Paltz council approves new names for buildings named after slave-owning families

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Students walk to class at SUNY New Paltz on October 10, 2018. (Photo: Patrick Oehler/Poughkeepsie Journal)

The SUNY New Paltz College Council on Wednesday unanimously approved a slate of new names to replace those of buildings named for slave-owning families.

The six new names each have local roots, a theme which was popular in a [survey of possible names \(/story/news/local/2018/12/17/suny-new-paltz-asks-alumni-weigh-renaming-buildings/2304394002/\)](#) distributed to more than 3,000 students, faculty, staff, alumni and community members, according to a release from the college. They include Shawangunk Hall, named for the Shawangunk Ridge, which is visible from campus; and Minnewaska Hall, named for a lake that sits on the ridge.

The school next plans to draft a resolution which would remove current names and assign new ones, for the SUNY Board of Trustees to review, according to the release.

For the past year and a half, the school has been [considering \(/story/news/2018/01/26/suny-new-paltz-buildings-named-slave-owners-spark-debate/1068104001/\)](#) renaming six Hasbrouck Complex buildings named after Huguenot families who settled in the region and owned slaves. After the council [voted \(/story/news/local/2019/02/21/suny-new-paltz-council-votes-rename-huguenot-buildings/2945174002/\)](#) in late February to rename the buildings, a study group including different members of the campus community and a Historic Huguenot Street Board member compiled a list of recommendations to the council.

The council then made their choices from that list.

"I am grateful to the study group for their thoughtful efforts in this process, and to those who provided thoughtful input on the survey that informed their work," New Paltz President Donald P. Christian said in the release. "The recommendation to have the names reflect our local beauty is most fitting."

He added: "We will make every effort to bring this matter to the Board as early as possible, hopefully this spring."

The six-on-campus buildings whose names could be changed include Bevier Hall, Crispell Hall, Deyo Hall, DuBois Hall, Lefevre Hall and Hasbrouck Dining Hall. In addition to Shawangunk Hall and Minnewaska Hall, the new names include:

- Awosting Hall, named after another lake on the Shawangunk Ridge.
- Mohonk Hall, named after a lake adjacent to Mohonk Mountain House.
- Ashokan Hall, named for an Iroquois word meaning "place for fish." The former Ashokan Field Campus located in the Catskill Mountains was a part of SUNY New Paltz from 1967 through 2008, according to the release.
- Peregrine Dining Hall, named for the local Peregrine falcons.

The school didn't mention which Hasbrouck buildings will be receiving what names.

New Paltz [began considering changing the names of buildings \(/story/news/2017/10/04/honoring-past-ignoring-flawed-figures/700971001/\)](#) in August 2017 following the deadly white supremacist Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville that same month. Many students were [vocally supportive \(/story/news/local/2018/11/01/suny-new-paltz-postpones-vote-renaming-buildings/1851803002/\)](#) of the name changes, and Christian was in support, too.

A working group of students, faculty and staff is also considering concepts for a contemplative space to learn about the complete history of the campus, including the Huguenot families, according to the release.

"I am committed to ensuring that we keep the Huguenot names and the many contributions of these families alive on our campus," Christian said. "As this matter moves to Albany for final resolution, I again wish to thank members of our campus community for their participation in this process, which began in August 2017."

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