

Bryn Mawr College Board of Trustees, Summer 2018

To the Bryn Mawr Community:

I write on behalf of the Bryn Mawr College Board

**our commitment to academic excellence has been unwavering,
to the education of all women of intellectual promise and ambi**

states: “we believe that only through considering many perspectives do we gain a deeper understanding of each other and the world.” These values frame all that we do; we cannot pursue our mission without committing to the work of equity.

Principles for Naming

Names on campus are powerful symbols of who we are and whom we aspire to be. In recognition of this, the Board has affirmed the following principles concerning “recognition naming.”

1. The Board of Trustees is responsible for honorific and memorial naming of positions, programs, buildings, spaces, and awards. Honorific and memorial naming recognizes exceptional levels of achievement, service and/or support.
2. Naming should be consistent with the mission of the College and the values expressed by that mission. Those honored should embody values that members of the College community would seek to emulate.
3. Renaming in consideration of values or actions associated with the namesake will be undertaken rarely and reluctantly. There is a presumption against renaming programs, buildings, spaces, and awards on the basis of the values associated with their namesakes. Some views that we hold today, including those expounded in the most enlightened universities, may be shown to be misguided in the future. Consideration of renaming thus requires thoughtful discernment and should be accompanied by humility.

In considering whether renaming is an appropriate course of action, the Board will consider whether the principal legacy of the namesake is fundamentally at odds with the mission of the College and the values expressed by that mission. In cases of those currently honored or memorialized who held views or engaged in practices inconsistent with the College’s current mission and values, effort should be made to provide a fuller context of the individual’s work and values. It is also important to assess how heavily the legacy weighs on the College community, including the faculty, students, and staff who represent the present and future of the College. When considering renaming, the College endeavors to ensure that any renaming decision does not have the effect of erasing history.

4. Establishing naming going forward should take into account the College's mission and values, including its desire to be diverse and inclusive as well as its desire to honor support, service, and achievement.

Legacy of M. Carey Thomas

Among Bryn Mawr's former presidents and deans, M. Carey Thomas is prominently memorialized on campus. The iconic campus building that housed the original library, and its hall, were named in 1935 to recognize Thomas' contributions to Bryn Mawr College. In addition, the College recognizes Thomas' legacy through the M. Carey Thomas Award, which is given to "an American woman in recognition of eminent achievement," and two writing prizes.

Guided by Bryn Mawr College's principles for naming, the Board reviewed and discussed historical documents and input from community members, paying particular attention to:

1. Whether Thomas' achievement or service to the College was exceptional.
2. Whether she embodied values that members of the College should seek to emulate.
3. What the symbolic weight of Thomas' legacy and associated values communicate to faculty, students and staff.

The Board recognizes that Thomas' achievements and service to the College were indeed exceptional. She persisted through the institutionalized sexism of three different graduate schools across two continents to earn her Ph.D., and she produced scholarship that remained highly regarded for nearly a century. She was a national spokeswoman for higher education for women, a leader in the women's suffrage movement, and an early advocate for an Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution. She set the highest standards for Bryn Mawr in every respect, including rigorous entrance exams, an Oxford- and Cambridge-inspired campus plan, and a commitment to building a faculty of talented scholar-teachers. Her insistence upon women's capacity for intellectual achievement changed the face of the academy and continues to ani(y a)-4.mo (er)-5.5 na

Entwined with Thomas' fierce ambition for women's intellectual achievement was a commitment to the idea that white racial superiority was essential to a successful society. This

The Board's Decision

The Board has decided to leave Thomas' name inscribed on the building façade but to use the names "The Old Library" and "The Great Hall" – the original names of the building and hall,

The research, debate, and reflection in which the campus and the Board engaged this year has been inspiring, and it has spurred us to listen to and understand one another more deeply. The Board is grateful for this opportunity to learn and work in partnership with our full community – students, faculty, staff, alumnae/i, parents, and friends – to envision and create our future, illuminated by a deeper understanding of our past.

Sincerely,

Ann Logan

Chair, Bryn Mawr College Board of Trustees