

# **SUNY Oswego Faculty Assembly Resolution FA 202302-1**

## **Task Force on the Haudenosaunee Confederacy Naming on the Oswego Campus**

### **Issue Background**

Both faculty and students have raised questions about the current names of dining halls, residence halls and roads associated with the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. These include several residence halls on West Campus (Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca) and other structures (roads, dining halls, fields) which use inappropriate euphemisms (“Iroquois”<sup>1</sup>) associated with the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.<sup>2</sup>

There is great power in names and naming and it is the opinion of a number of SUNY Oswego faculty that the dormitories, roads, and fields around West campus do not honor the Haudenosaunee<sup>3</sup>; furthermore, there is no educational value of living/playing/driving in these spaces nor are there any institutional standards for educating students, faculty, and staff about either the “contributions of the Iroquois to New York State”, the “historical and sociological significance of those nations”, or the concerns of contemporary Haudenosaunee peoples.

The objective of this motion is to endorse the creation of a task force to examine naming associated with the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and to make recommendations to the Faculty Assembly regarding the renaming of some or all of these structures. The recommendations would go forward to the SUNY Oswego College Council, the body tasked with naming campus structures.

### **Creating a Task Force**

Under our Faculty Bylaws (Article VII, Section 4):

The Faculty Assembly and the administration shall concurrently create task forces on issues of college-wide concern and charge them with specific duties in order to enhance communication and consultation among faculty, administration, professional staff, the unions, and the students. Each task force and its charge shall be established by formal written approval of both the Faculty Assembly and the administration. The written charge shall include a deadline for the work to be completed and a detailed description of how the membership shall be determined. A report of the results shall be recorded in the minutes of the Faculty Assembly. Upon reaching its deadline, the task force shall cease to exist, unless otherwise extended by the consent of both the Assembly and the

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<sup>1</sup> Iroquois is an etic term (of French/British/Algonkin origin) which translates as “the snake people” or “snake in the grass”. “Iroquois” people call themselves “Haudenosaunee” or “people of the longhouse” which is a confederacy of Nations including the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, + Tuscarora.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.onondaganation.org/history/>

<sup>3</sup> According to archival notes “Iroquois Nations were chosen due to the influence on James Fenimore Cooper’s writing and the acknowledgement of the traditions of the Iroquois tribe who made contributions to New York State.” Also to “commemorate the historical and sociological significance of those nations.”

administration. . . . Each task force shall include balanced representation from the faculty, administration, professional staff, unions, and, when appropriate, the Student Association.

With the completion of the Task Force report, the Faculty Assembly may then choose to endorse the recommendations and ask the Office of the President to bring these recommendations to the College Council.

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**Campus**

WHEREAS, SUNY-Oswego founded the first department of “Native American Studies” in the SUNY system and we remain committed to the recruitment and retention of onkwehon:we students, faculty, and staff as well as the health, safety, and wellness of the entire campus community; and

WHEREAS, the faculty assembly approved, on September 14, 2020, the land acknowledgement statement<sup>4</sup> plainly stating SUNY-Oswego’s commitment to the “values of diversity and equity, inclusion and social justice” and “cultivating relationships with Native American communities” in order to “dismantle the legacies of conquest and colonization”; and

WHEREAS, SUNY Oswego’s strategic planning identifies an inclusive community as an institutional priority; and

WHEREAS, no members of Haudenosaunee leadership (or the Chiefs Council at Onondaga) were consulted before the naming of any Oswego campus structures; and

THEREFORE, BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the State University of New York at Oswego Faculty Assembly constitute a task force to make recommendations concerning the removal and replacement of all Haudenosaunee-themed building, road, and field names on our campus.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://ww1.oswego.edu/land-acknowledgment>