



PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS COLLEGE

Linnaeus Deliberation Circle April Progress Report

Submitted to the Gustavus Board of Trustees
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on behalf of the Linnaeus Deliberation Circle Leadership Team
April 12, 2021

State of the Circle

The Circle continues to be part of a larger national story, where many organizations, institutions, states and municipalities work through, “...a process of historical reckoning, a nuanced understanding of the complicated histories we have inherited” (Mayoral Advisory Commission, City of New York, 2017). As our work moves toward scenario creation and choices for the Board, common themes have emerged that will shape the choices we offer.

1. Create an intentional and rich educational frame

I think making the controversy visible and letting people wrestle with the dilemma of the Linnaeus categorization of human beings provides a great opportunity to engage the complicated nature of our ideas/structures of thinking, their consequences in our life and over time their consequences for humanity. There are other options beyond the binary—”yes or no” on the name dilemma.

[How can we] tie this topic and exploration thereof to the anti-racist education we’re doing on campus this spring?

My concern about entirely removing reference to Linnaeus is that we lose some of the really constructive stuff that he did. We also reinforce an idea that people are "good/right" or "bad/wrong." There is a long line of biologists behind (and in front of) Linnaeus who were/are racist, sexist, ableist, jingoistic, etc. I am less interested in explaining away their faults as a product of their time as I am digging into the messiness of convictions and influence of a dominant culture on our practices, because I think there are lessons for us now and for future generations.

2. Celebrate contributions of underrepresented scientists

In terms of telling the story of the College's connection with Sweden, I note that Sweden boasts 13 distinguished botanists who were women in early times before women were allowed to participate in academic and scientific communities.

Reach out to the Black Botanists group for support and ideas
<https://blackbotanistsweek.weebly.com/meet-our-team.html>

Add a co-name to the arb; adding a silenced BIPOC voice (maybe Swedish) with contributions to ecology, environmentalism, or anything else arboretum related.

3. Reimagine Gustavus' relationships with Indigenous Communities

...we should simply call it The Arboretum, with no specific person or ownership tied into the name. The arboretum is a place for all people here in the greater St. Peter and Gustavus community, especially the indigenous people whose land we are occupying.

I have also been engaged in the College's indigenous relations work, and would like to find a way to learn from the Lakota cultural practice of not putting the names of people on land, because the land has its own spirit.

4. Enlarge, deepen, re-frame, or initiate Gustavus relationships with Sweden/Swedish partners

Is there an opportunity to connect with the Linnaean Gardens of Uppsala, the oldest botanical garden in Sweden? The Linnaean Garden was founded by the Swedish Linnaeus Society (Svenska Linnésällskapet) in 1918, restoring his garden and country house in Hammarby. Uppsala University took over maintaining the garden in 1977; the society still runs the museum.

Since I am from Sweden, I had a quick look at what Uppsala University has done to address this legacy, and I found that they have used this negative history, as a reason to study these issues as we encounter them today; they founded a research center in 2017 (Centre for Multidisciplinary Studies on Racism (CEMFOR: <https://cemfor.uu.se/about-us/>)), to highlight issues related to racism (much in the same way gender study centers does with gender issues), they have held conferences on the topic of racism and they are on a mission to learn more and educate on the topics of racism. I like that they are recognizing the wrongdoings from the past, while looking ahead and at the present issues that we are experiencing here and now.

If culture defines heritage, why do we need to be attached to individuals (such as Linnaeus) when it is more important to celebrate culture and traditions, such as the festival of St. Lucia, fika, and other nordic traditions?

5. Reinforce the health and environmental mission of the Arboretum

Link the learning and healing environmental mission of the arboretum with any decision to honor not only Black but native peoples' safe and welcoming experience of the mission. How can we help people see themselves at the arb no matter what their background is?

The Arboretum will thrive and fulfill its mission equally well with or without the "Linnaeus" label as long as any replacement name honors the plants, place, or community. To my mind,

“Gustavus Arboretum” seems perfectly appropriate, as it honors the community that nurtures the Arb and the community the Arb serves.

The name for me is not important. The effort I am seeing about the name is way more effort than I have ever seen in 40 years getting more diversity in plants, getting more diversity in who visits. [This could be] a huge fundraising opportunity.

Stakeholder Impacts

Decisions within the five themes can be designed to positively impact the stakeholder groups named by the Circle as the most important. The only stakeholder group that may not be obviously served is that of Honorees/Families of currently named spaces (highlighted in yellow below), because that is a group impacted perhaps more by an ongoing re-naming policy than by the Linnaeus decision itself. We realize those are connected as the Linnaeus decision could be precedential, but those concerns for current honorees would be best served by engaging aspects of the Linnaeus Deliberation Circle’s process(es) that were helpful as part of an overall policy.

Stakeholders Positively Impacted		
BIPOC people	Under-represented and traditionally marginalized people	Partnerships, relationships, and connections with Swedish people & institutions
Science teachers and learners	Arboretum leaders (founders, advisory board members, etc)	Future donors & fundraising staff
Current GAC students and staff	Future GAC students/prospective students	College Brand
Politically diverse “constituents” and people with whom we work	GAC leadership	Some who identify as Christians [who feel a responsibility to enhance social justice & center BIPOC voices]
Honorees (and their families) of named spaces		

Four Choices + The Hardware

Among decision scenario choices, there emerged four overall choices, with additional considerations about the Granlund bust and attendant plaque/signage. Ordering here reflects size of support for each option currently among all gathered inputs.

1. Remove the Name (reverting back to “The Arboretum at Gustavus”)
 - a. Keep the bust as-is; add educational signage
 - b. Remove the bust completely; add educational signage
 - c. Move the bust somewhere else on campus; add educational signage
2. Rename (many ideas suggested by community members)
 - a. Keep the bust as-is; add educational signage
 - b. Remove the bust completely; add educational signage
 - c. Move the bust somewhere else on campus; add educational signage
3. Keep the Name
 - a. Keep the bust as-is
 - b. Add educational signage
4. Add a Co-Name (many ideas suggested by community members)
 - a. Keep the bust and commission something else for the new name
 - b. Add educational signage

Decision Scenario Structure for May

Decision scenarios based on and among these themes allow transformation of the space to include and welcome all. More health for the land will translate into more opportunities (education, funding, natural science, partnerships, recognition of more scientists) and ultimately invites everyone to participate. Scenarios we offer in more detail in May will integrate the themes and options for the BOT’s consideration:

- What should happen
- Downstream effects we would expect
- Stakeholders’ needs that are met/not met
- Important considerations of that scenario