



**PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL
ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION**

GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS COLLEGE

**Linnaeus Deliberation Circle
February Progress Report**

Submitted to the Gustavus Board of Trustees
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February 12, 2021

Table of Contents

Rationale for Circle’s Formation and Process	2
Circle Membership	3
History of Naming	4
Known Facts	5
Linnaeus’ Classification of Homo Sapiens	6
Stakeholder Model Process Description	7
Questions Generated	8
Stakeholder Impacts Identified During Phase 1	9
Phase 2	11
Intersections with DEI Education and Racial Justice & Inclusion Plan	11
Additional Resources	12

Rationale for Circle's Formation and Process

In the aftermath of George Floyd's murder by police officer Derek Chauvin on the evening of May 25, 2020, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, a global movement for the dignity and value of black lives gained additional strength and momentum across the globe. Gustavus, like many other institutions across the country, strengthened its commitment to addressing racist mindsets, policies, and practices on campus and in our community. Reassessing the names of places and spaces and considering removal of statues and other public art are two components of this movement across the globe, in Minnesota, and within institutions of higher education. While other colleges and universities are grappling with the names of major buildings, Gustavus is undertaking a deliberation about the connection of a name, Carl Linnaeus, with its arboretum. At issue are the impacts of his [taxonomy of humans](#) in multiple editions of his work *Systema Naturae*, and their role in the development and perpetuation of scientific racism.

In June 2020, a student organization named The Radicals generated a petition for the College to remove Linnaeus' name from the arboretum; the petition was signed by over 200 students, faculty, staff, and alumni. In July, in response to the College's public declaration of renewed commitment to addressing racism and its ongoing harms, The Radicals sent an email to campus leaders stating their view that the Linnaeus question was a critical issue to include in the College's antiracism work. Students, faculty, and staff have been raising this question about Linnaeus and the arboretum for a number of years, but, until now, the question has not been deliberated seriously by any official governing or leadership body at the College.

In late summer, campus leaders and trustees began to consider what a robust investigation into this issue might include. In December 2020, Board of Trustees chair Scott Anderson appointed Siri Erickson and Ron White to co-chair the Linnaeus Deliberation Circle, which includes faculty, staff, students, and trustees selected by Anderson, Erickson and White. Professor Kathy Lund Dean is serving as process facilitator for the Circle, bringing her expertise as a leadership, management, and ethics scholar and as a stakeholder process facilitator.

At its first meeting on January 8, 2021, Gustavus Board of Trustees chair, Scott Anderson, gave the Circle its **charge**:

1. To consider impacts of Linnaeus' writings about a system of human classification.
2. To evaluate information the Board needs to know about such impacts.
3. To create decision-focused scenarios that carefully weigh potential impacts.
4. To extend this as an educational opportunity to the entire campus as part of Gustavus' DEI effort.

In the three meetings that have followed, the Linnaeus Deliberation Circle has generated an initial list of stakeholder impacts, identified key questions, gathered additional information, and engaged the process and charge with honesty and thoughtfulness.

As we complete Phase 1 and submit this progress report to the trustees, we want to name that this work is complex, multifaceted, and incomplete. We look forward to receiving board member responses to the work we have done thus far and to continuing this important deliberative process during the spring semester.

Linnaeus Deliberation Circle Membership, Phase 1

Each member was selected because of their specific expertise and perspectives in order to create a diverse and robust deliberative group.

Leadership Team

Siri Erickson, co-chair
Kathy Lund Dean, facilitator
Amy Mukamuri, secretary
Ron White, co-chair

Students

Alexys Guidry
Signe Jeremiason
Eric Johnson
Miguel Marin

Faculty

Darsa Donelan
Jon Grinnell
Glenn Kranking
Sun Hee Lee

Staff

Tim Kennedy
Scott Moeller
Pam Pearson
Tom Young

Trustees

Jon Anderson
Ed Drenttel
John Hallberg
Susie Heim

History of Naming

At the beginning of this brief historical account of the arboretum and its name, we acknowledge the people of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ nations who were caretakers of this land for centuries before the existence of Gustavus Adolphus College, who were forcibly removed from these lands by actions that benefitted settlers at the time of the College's founding, and who continue to care about this land.

On January 6, 2021, Harriet Mason, visionary, creator, and co-founder of the arboretum at Gustavus, sent an email to President Bergman to help illuminate the history of the arboretum and to share her perspective on the Circle's deliberation about Linnaeus. Harriet, the first coordinator of the Melva Lind Interpretive Center, and her husband, Charles, the first executive director of the arboretum and a professor in the biology department, provided leadership for the development and use of the arboretum. Both retired from their roles at Gustavus in 1998.

According to Harriet, the creation of the arboretum began in earnest in 1972. At that time, the president's house had just been constructed. President Barth and his wife wanted to have some trees planted around the property, and that is when the arboretum was envisioned. Previously, the area had been a wheat and soybean field that the College rented to a local farmer. President Barth made a formal request to the trustees in 1973 to officially launch the arboretum, and the trustees approved the request. The Masons and others began planting trees in the fall of 1973; over a year later Charles Mason published a Master Plan for the Gustavus Arboretum in January 1975. The arboretum was officially dedicated four years later on Arbor Day, Friday, April 27, 1979, in Christ Chapel. In a letter from President Edward Lindell to friends of the Gustavus Arboretum inviting them to the dedication, he noted that "planting a tree and developing an arboretum are acts of faith, and we are very grateful to all of those who have joined us in faith."

In Harriet's account, from 1973 until 1988 not many people paid attention to the arboretum, as the trees were only still growing. In the meeting minutes of the Arboretum Committee from November 13, 1984, it is noted that the group "formally adopted the name of 'Linnaeus Arboretum of Gustavus Adolphus' as the official name of the arboretum" because of Linnaeus' scientific reputation, Swedish nationality, and scholarship in botany. However, the name was not formally dedicated until several years later. On October 29, 1986, 240 plants arrived as a gift from the Linnaeus Gardens in Uppsala, Sweden, and were unwrapped, planted, and stored in the Nobel Hall greenhouse until they were planted in the arboretum.

In the mid-1980's, President Kendall advanced the construction of the interpretive center, breaking ground on the project in October 1987. The interpretive center was completed in April of 1988. Naming the interpretive center spurred conversation about the possibility of formally naming the arboretum and doing both in conjunction with the College's 125th anniversary celebration. Gustavus formally dedicate the Melva Lind Interpretive Center and the Linnaeus Arboretum during its 125th Anniversary ceremonies in May 1988, which included the presence of Swedish Consul General, Karl-Erik Andersson, and Director of the Linnaean Gardens at Uppsala University, Orjan Nilsson.

In her email to President Bergman, Harriet noted "It never occurred to any of us in 1988 that the name would carry so much baggage." In a later communication, Harriet emphasized that the Swedish connection was important at the time of the naming.

This summary is based on Harriet Mason's written and oral histories, primary source materials in the library archives at Gustavus, and documents found in the Masons' collection of records and documents from their tenure at Gustavus.

Known Facts

These are but a few relevant facts about Carl Linnaeus, his writings, and scientific racism.

About Carl Linnaeus

- He was Swedish and lived from 1707-1778; he was knighted “Carl von Linné” in 1758.
- He was a botanist, zoologist, taxonomist, physician, gardener, husband, father, and professor who wrote 70 books, hundreds of articles, and over 6,000 personal letters.
- He created an internationally accepted scientific language that allowed researchers around the world to communicate with each other.
- He taught at the University of Uppsala, Sweden, for more than 20 years and in 1747 was appointed chief royal physician.

About Linnaeus’ Writings in *Systema Naturae*

- *Systema Naturae* included a classification of humans as part of the animal kingdom in the class mammalia; all human beings are included in the category Homo sapiens.
- *Systema Naturae* included a classification of humans into four varieties: American, European, Asian, and African.
- Though the order of the varieties was not fixed, by the 12th edition, there was an observable pattern in the editions of placing *Africanus* in the fourth position on the list.
- In the final edition of *Systema Naturae*, Linnaeus included a disclaimer indicating that he is not to be considered an authority regarding his descriptions of the human varieties: “The anatomical, physiological, natural, moral, civil and social histories of man are best described by their respective writers.”

About Linnaeus and Scientific Racism

- Linnaeus’ ideas about human classification are cited in print and web-based academic writings, as well as displayed at prominent museums and universities, as part of scholarship, exhibits, and programs that show the development of scientific racism.
- In timelines outlining the lineage of scientific racism, Linnaeus’ classification of Homo sapiens is commonly identified as a starting point and as an example of how pseudoscientific racial categories have been used to support racist ideas and actions, including discrimination, violence, colonialism, and white supremacy.
- Linnaeus’ writings do not include direct mention of support for slavery or racist actions.
- Several of Linnaeus’ most famous students were public and vocal opponents of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

About how Linnaeus is Considered in Sweden Today

- Swedes are debating Linnaeus’ legacy vis-a-vis scientific racism; the conversation has focused on the presence of statues and less on place names (streets, gardens, schools, etc).
- Linnaeus scholars and racial justice activists in Sweden have differing viewpoints on the legacy of Linnaeus’ human classification and how it should be addressed today.

Linnaeus' Classification of Homo Sapiens

The Linnean Society of London [website](#) provides helpful context for the evolution of Linnaeus' thinking and writing about the classification of the varieties of Homo sapiens throughout his career. It also provides some interpretive possibilities for how Linnaeus developed and modified this over time.

This table is a translation from the 10th Edition of Linnaeus' Systema Naturae published in 1758 and as found on the Linnean Society of London website referenced and linked to in the above paragraph.

Species	Skin color, medical temperament, body posture	Physical Traits	Behavior	Clothing	Government
Americanus	Red, choleric and straight	Straight, black and thick hair; gaping nostrils; [freckled] face; beardless chin	Unyielding cheerful, free	Paints himself in a maze of red lines	Governed by customary right
Europaeus	White, sanguine, muscular	Plenty of yellow hair; blue eyes	Light, wise, inventor	Protected by tight clothing	Governed by rites
Asiaticus	Sallow, melancholic, stiff	Blackish hair, dark eyes	Stern, haughty, greedy	Protected by loose garments	Governed by opinions
Africanus	Black, phlegmatic, lazy	Dark hair, with many twisting braids; silky skin; flat nose; swollen lips; Women [with] elongated labia; breasts lactating profusely.	Sly, sluggish, neglectful	Anoints himself with fat	Governed by choice [caprice]

Stakeholder Model Process Description

Given our charge and in conversation with our facilitator, Professor Kathy Lund Dean, we selected a process for the Circle based on a stakeholder analysis model. This approach prioritizes a search for understanding impacts rather than intentions, the creation of a space that allows us to hear from multiple voices and perspectives rather than searching for a singular truth, and the development of viable decision-making scenarios instead of recommending one right answer or solution. The organizing question for our Circle in this stakeholder analysis process is: *Who is impacted, and how, by a decision about the continued use of Linnaeus' name at Gustavus?*

Features and guidelines of this process include:

1. All stakeholder experiences are legitimate
2. All stakeholder descriptions of impact are legitimate
3. All stakeholder groups/members get to share their truth without interruption, judgment, or minimization
4. All stakeholder groups honor others by hearing their stories and claims of impact
5. Reconciling every stakeholder group's needs and priorities in a decision is not possible
6. Deliberative process integrity rather than consensus is the focus
7. When choices are made to prioritize one need over another, the rationale will be clearly communicated
8. A deliberative group is effective, addresses healing and moves forward when members accept the resolution as the outcome of a robust process where all voices have been heard
9. Stakeholder deliberation is a lived example of Gustavus' vision to equip our community members to "to act on the great challenges of our time"
10. We will have set sharing and speaking processes
11. Conflict is a sign of engagement, care, and trust
12. The commitment is to learn about this issue, rather than to debate or defend a position
13. A spirit of genuine inquiry means people will feel uncomfortable, but it is not acceptable to feel unsafe
14. Each person has gifts to share and contributions to make to our learning and outcomes

Questions Generated

As part of the Circle's process in January, the group generated questions to guide additional avenues of input, investigation, and research. We have asked members of the Circle, based on their expertise and interests, to bring more information back to the group related to the following questions:

1. What else can we learn about the process by which the Arboretum was named?
Amy Mukamuri
2. How are students thinking about this issue now? What have been and might be student reactions to changes, both at Gustavus and elsewhere?
Student members in the Circle
3. How are institutions and other organizations thinking about Linnaeus in Sweden?
Glenn Kranking
4. What are the impacts on teaching and learning at Gustavus with respect to re-examining Linnaeus as we are?
Jon Grinnell
5. How are other schools doing this? How are other institutions engaging with deliberating about legacies and creating processes by which named spaces on campus get re-named?
John Hallberg
6. How might changing the name affect opportunities for students to study away in Sweden, or affect opportunities for students with various partners in Sweden (like internships or individual programs)?
Pam Pearson
7. How does Gustavus consider a named space as an aspect of our identity, values, and mission? What are connections between naming policies that exist now and a re-naming policy to be created?
President Bergman, Gustavus Leaders, and Trustees

Stakeholder Impacts Identified During Phase 1

While the work of identifying stakeholder impacts continues, this table illustrates the range and scope of impacts that the Circle is discussing at this stage in the process.

Stakeholder	Brief Description of Impact
BIPOC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Interpretations of scientific and “natural” racism have broad, daily, negative impacts on all aspects of their lives · Educating non-BIPOC about the lived experience as a BIPOC is tiring and burdensome · “Squaring history with the lived experience” as a BIPOC may not be a welcome story for non-BIPOC
Under-represented and traditionally marginalized people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Bearing the burden of actual & emotional work of ‘fixing’ racist divisions and systems · Frustration at continued minimization of their experiences by white people or people in power · Bearing the burden of living with persistent degrading descriptions of them from L’s work
Science teachers and learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Accepting the gift of L’s scientific contributions while simultaneously understanding the very difficult racial interpretations · Intent or motive vs. racism and marginalization impacts
Partnerships, relationships, and connections with Swedish people & institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Risk of alienating them, losing opportunities for students, angering/offending them, losing long-term important relationships · Opportunity to work together with partners in Sweden to reinvision names that maintain connection but dismantle racism
Current GAC students and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · What it means about Gustavus as an institution and the commitment to racial justice by honoring L · Injustice is antithetical to our values; committed to justice · Responding to this challenge is part of GAC’s responsibility to move the institution forward by working to dismantle systemic racism

<p>Future GAC students/prospective students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Need to learn about L’s scientific contributions within the context of the very difficult racial interpretations · BIPOC prospective students may not feel welcome when seeing a named space about someone whose legacy is problematic
<p>Honorees (and their families) of named spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · A potential public repudiation of their contributions to GAC if their family name gets ‘evaluated’ · Emotionally significant feelings of judgment or scorn · Lack of criteria by which current named donors may be judged going forward
<p>Politically diverse “constituents” and people with whom we work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · We may have to engage with politically “red” people who will be angry at this deliberation or commitments to change · They may direct anger at us due to emotionally significant feelings of judgment or scorn
<p>Some who identify as Christians</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Faith requires prioritizing those who have been marginalized or deemed unworthy by society · Intent or motive does not matter. Racism and marginalization are real
<p>Arboretum leaders (founders, advisory board members, etc)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · For those who identify strongly with the L name: A public repudiation of something they think is important · Emotionally significant feelings of judgment or scorn
<p>GAC leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Actual and emotional work of managing bimodal opinions about L from a broad spectrum of stakeholders · This issue as embedded within the larger DEI commitment that not everyone thinks is a priority for GAC
<p>Future donors & fundraising staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Tension about who is “OK” to take money from · Lack of framework: how do we judge potential donors to be able to accept gifts?
<p>College Brand</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Ability to recruit and retain students and employees who are aware of L’s work and question the College’s commitment to racial equity given the name association

	· Perception that we are not fully committed to antiracism, DEI; “optical allyship” of saying we are antiracists but not doing anything to address racism as a lived experience for BIPOC
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Phase 2

Phase 2 will build on the work the Circle began in Phase 1 and will progress towards the aim of providing trustees with decision-making scenarios and their respective downstream impacts.

The Circle will meet monthly during the spring semester to complete Phase 2 of its work. Our tasks will include:

1. Incorporating feedback from trustees about Phase 1
2. Gathering information related to identified questions
3. Creating forums for input from additional stakeholders
4. Generation of possible scenarios and their downstream impacts
5. Presenting scenarios to the trustees for discussion by the Board of Trustees meeting in May 2021

Intersections with DEI Education and Racial Justice & Inclusion Plan

Discussions about race and addressing racist impacts are not easy. This work is especially challenging for white people, who are often less experienced in identifying and grappling with the impacts of racism, analyzing how the dynamics of power and privilege play out in conversations among people of different racialized groups, and navigating through these conversations with awareness about how one’s own intersectional identities overlay onto deliberations that include racial discrimination as a central component. All of these patterns are well documented in scholarship about diversity, equity, and inclusion. As such, we should expect that these dynamics will be operative in the Circle and among the Trustees as Gustavus undertakes consideration of this question surrounding the Linnaeus name and its association with the arboretum.

The Circle and its members are working to pay attention to the following practices in order to engage this process with awareness about these equity dynamics:

1. Being aware of power differences, histories of oppression, and the way identities impact our perspectives and behaviors.
2. Centering the voices, perspectives, and experiences of minoritized groups, including women, BIPOC, and LGBTQAI people.
3. De-centering the feelings of white people who are uncomfortable talking about race and racist impacts.

4. Acknowledging discomfort, fear, anger, and other emotions that may arise in participants without insisting that the presence of those feelings means others in the group are doing something wrong in the way they are speaking.
5. Maintaining an expectation of confidentiality among Circle members to enhance transparency and safety in sharing difficult conversations.

Additional Resources

*Members of the Gustavus community have identified many relevant resources to help in the investigation of the Circle's primary question: **Who is impacted, and how, by a decision about the continued use of Linnaeus' name at Gustavus?** This question is multifaceted and requires consideration of a wide range of topics. We recommend these resources as starting points for understanding the contexts and issues related to this primary question.*

Linnaeus Scholars

Linnean Society of London, especially on [Linnaeus and Race](#)

Linnaeus Scholar Gunnar Broberg - [October 2020 in the Annual Report of the Swedish Linnaeus Society](#)

Linnaeus Scholar Roland Thorstensson - [Written reflection](#)

Scientific Racism

Entry on [scientific classifications of race](#) in Encyclopedia Britannica

[Wikipedia entry on Scientific Racism](#)

[Timeline](#) of Scientific Racism

Indigenous Land

[Little War on the Prairie](#) - This American Life radio program about the US/Dakota War of 1862, story by journalist and Mankato native and Gustavus alum, John Biewen

[ELCA's Repudiation](#) of the Doctrine of Discovery