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The University of Maine Office of the President's Community Message on the Clarence C. Little Hall Name Change and Task Force

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Office of the President

Community message — June 29

June 29, 2020

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In March of this year, I convened a university-wide task force and charged it with recommending criteria for deciding whether an individual's name should be removed from a UMaine facility, and whether to remove Clarence C. Little's name from the campus building bearing his name. And if recommending replacement names, I asked the task force what criteria should be considered.

Based on the recommendations of that task force, I will be requesting that the University of Maine System Board of Trustees remove the name of Clarence C. Little from one of our academic buildings. UMaine will submit a request to the University of Maine System Facilities/Finance/Technology Committee for consideration at its September meeting. The naming of University of Maine physical facilities is covered by University of Maine System policy.

In its June 23 report, the 10-member C.C. Little Hall Name Task Force chaired by Kenda Scheele, associate vice president for Student Life, noted that "a combination of the historical record about the career of C.C. Little, and the goal to create and maintain a university topography representative of current institutional values, compels a renaming of Little Hall. Little clearly made valuable contributions to science, particularly with regard to mouse genetics. However, his career also includes two major violations of current UMaine values. First, he promoted a scientific theory anchored in invidious judgments about the relative worth of different kinds of people. This clearly violates the UMaine mission statement 'that honors the heritage and diversity of our state and nation.' Second, he had a long leadership role in a campaign orchestrated by a PR firm to discredit public health evidence about smoking in order to protect a profitable industry. This violates UMaine's commitment to 'research-based knowledge' that 'improves the quality of life for people in Maine and around the world' via 'responsible stewardship.' Finally, Little's time at UMaine was relatively brief and not especially noteworthy, whether looked at in terms of his scientific accomplishments or his contributions to the university. Little Hall exemplifies the kind of university structure that should be renamed based on a careful reevaluation of a previous historical period." (pg. 8)

Clarence Little served as UMaine president from 1922–25 before becoming president at the University of Michigan. In his career, Little held significant positions in the American Society for the Control of Cancer (later renamed the American Cancer Society) and the Tobacco Industry Research Committee (later renamed the Council for Tobacco

Research). He was an early supporter of the American eugenics movement and founded the American Eugenics Society. He was a leader of the Immigration Restriction League and the scientific director of the Tobacco Industry Research Committee.

I agree with the task force that the renaming of Little Hall is necessary. It provides an opportunity to promote reflection and conversations about the meaning of diversity, equity and inclusion on our campus, and to address specific issues of racism.

Ours is a diverse and welcoming university community, brought together by our differences and our most highly held values — among them civility, inclusion, compassion, understanding, personal responsibility and respect.

I thank the task force for its thorough fact-finding, thoughtful leadership and clear guidance. I also thank the members of Decolonizing UMaine and students who requested consideration of a name change. Their voices raised for change and out of concern for proper reflection of UMaine ideals and integrity followed those of University of Maine Student Government, which passed a resolution in April 2018, prior to my appointment as president, encouraging UMaine and the University of Maine System to change the name of the building.

And know that this work is a priority for UMaine and UMM. Our commitment to social justice will be the focus of the President's Council on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and will be renewed in our Diversity Action Plan for UMaine. Action to bring about meaningful change is needed and we will redouble our efforts to this work.

A copy of the task force report is [online](#).