

Department of Environmental Sciences Response to the Legacy Review Task Force Report

We acknowledge that BIPOC communities have been harmed by the racist beliefs and practices of historical figures and we support efforts to examine our connections to this history. However, a clear examination of T.H. Huxley's legacy shows that, although he was a product of and a beneficiary of the British Empire, he made significant contributions to science and he was a strong advocate for the abolition of slavery, the promotion of universal human rights and providing educational opportunities to under-represented groups. The harm to BIPOC communities has come primarily from those who have intentionally misrepresented and distorted T.H. Huxley's legacy. If the name of Huxley College is to be changed, it should not be justified on the basis of this false representation.

The Department of Environmental Sciences rejects the inclusion of the anti-science, anti-evolution, anti-fact, and anti-secular writings and concepts presented as part of the Legacy Review Task Force (LRTF) portrayal of T. H. Huxley. The previously submitted memo by Landis et al (<https://cpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/wp.wvu.edu/dist/b/8327/files/2021/09/Response-to-LRTF-report-updated-9-9-2021-2.pdf>) provides detailed evidence that the LRTF report legitimizes anti-evolution gaslighting and quote mining tactics by reproducing mis-representations and mis-quotes of the writings of T. H. Huxley without citing their original authors and the sources. Among these authors are:

- Henry M. Morris, founder of modern young-earth creationism, anti-evolutionist, and racist who espoused a biblical justification for slavery.
- Paul Glumaz, a long-term activist for the Lyndon LaRouche organization.
- Jerry R. Bergman, a young-earth creationist author focused on undermining evolution science and the “flawed concepts of Charles Darwin.”
- Brian Thomas, a writer for the Institute for Creation Research, a young-earth faux-research organization, who focuses on current events that he shoehorns into supporting creationism
- Michael Flannery, a fellow with the anti-evolution, intelligent-design-promoting Discovery Institute, which promotes creationism under the banner of “Intelligent Design”, who has produced a string of pseudohistorical commentary aimed at vilifying evolutionary scientists.
- Nicolaas Rupke, who has published several articles in the *Creation Research Society Quarterly*, a pseudoscience journal published by a creationist group whose

founders included Henry M. Morris. While Rupke has produced a noted biography of R. Owen, in his latest writing he does not accept natural selection as a mechanism of evolution. Notably, in the LRTF report his views are given greater weight than the other reviewers.

Acceptance of the Huxley portion of the LRTF recommendations, as written, constitutes an adoption by the Board of Trustees of the anti-science, anti-secular and mis-information discourse that is now so common and so damaging to our society. As a department we cannot concur with the acceptance of the report and the use of such tactics in a decision-making process. Such actions are anathema to a department that strongly supports and teaches the use of science and data in managing the environment in a fair and equitable manner. Continued use of such tactics harms the credibility of our Department, the College and the University in our role as educators, researchers and trusted parties in environmental decision making.

Our environmental problems are big enough that we want and need everyone at the table. It is by no means unreasonable to suggest that naming the college for a single individual does not capture the diversity of perspectives and expertise required to address current and future environmental challenges. It is imperative that the Department of Environmental Sciences be inclusive and supportive of the broad range of undergraduate and graduate students to achieve a better future for all.

If we choose to change the name of the college, we can do so without vilifying T.H. Huxley. Our department is eager to work with the rest of the college in exploring options for a name that captures our commitment to science and fact-based environmental decision making and management, while including and valuing contributions from all.

Background information for reviewers:

Hollenhorst, S., and Landis, W. 2021. Reconsider cancel-culture target at WWU. Seattle Times. <https://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/reconsider-cancel-culture-target-at-wwu/>

Landis, W., Leaf, D., Hollenhorst, S., and Bodensteiner, L. 2021. Op-Ed: Standing Up to Anti-Evolutionism: Finding a win-win outcome for justice and science in the Huxley College name issue. The Planet. <https://theplanetmagazine.net/op-ed-standing-up-to-anti-evolutionism-4cd26d17133a>

Landis et al 2021. Response to the Western Washington University Legacy Review Task Force Report. <https://cpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/wp.wvu.edu/dist/b/8327/files/2021/09/Response-to-LRTF-report-updated-9-9-2021-2.pdf>

Paci-Green et al. 2021. Opinion | Beyond a name, beyond the individual
Evaluating the legacy of Huxley and the future for environmental students at Western.
<http://www.westernfrontonline.com/article/2021/05/opinion-beyond-a-name-beyond-the-individual/>

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Vote on this document by the faculty of ESCI

20 in support

1 opposed

2 faculty traveling and could not be reached.