

September 18, 2021

Dr. Sabah Randhawa, President
Western Washington University
516 High St.
Bellingham WA 98225

Mr. John Meyer, Chair Board of Trustees
Western Washington University
516 High St.
Bellingham WA 98225

Dear President Randhawa and Chair Meyer:

The members of Dr. William Wade Haggard's (WWH) family were saddened and perplexed to learn that the Legacy Review Task Force (LRTF) voted five-to-four to remove his name from the building named in his honor.

As discussed below, we believe the process followed by the LRTF and its assessment of WWH's contributions and failings as college president are neither well researched nor balanced and do not meet the requirements of Western Washington University (WWU) President Sabah Randhawa's direction to the LRTF.

We ask the trustees to reject the LRTF's recommendation with respect to WWH.

The Haggard Family

When WWH arrived in Bellingham in 1939, during troubled times at the Western Washington College of Education (WWCE), his was a family of five. We are now a family of over fifty, most residing in the Bellingham/Seattle/Olympia corridor. Many of us have gone into the "family business" of teaching or administration.

Growing up, Western was at the center of our family life. Not only did our grandfather serve Western for twenty years, many of us are Campus School or WWU graduates. His children and grandchildren have served the community through numerous committees & boards, lead public school campaigns, and served on Western's foundation. A great-granddaughter, also a WWU graduate, is currently the assistant coach of Western's women basketball.

All of us support WWU's efforts to advance equity and eliminate systematic discrimination from its programs and operations, including the legacy review.

We are grateful for the leadership of Paul Dunn¹, the task force chair, and Philip Sharpe², an ex-WWU Trustee and task force member. Dissatisfied with the report and decisions of the LRTF, each wrote a letter to President Randhawa and the Board of Trustees adding their perspectives and missing or ignored information to the public discussion related to the LRTF and WWH. Taken together these letters raise significant questions about the completeness and fairness of the task force's work.

By submitting this letter, the Haggard family adds their voices to Dunn and Sharpe's criticisms of the LRTF's process and recommendation regarding WWH.

Dr. William Wade Haggard³

WWH was born 129 years ago, in 1892. He served in the World War I, attended college, and began work in a world where perspectives were very different than today.

One of his enduring beliefs, above all else, was in the power of education and how it opens doors. It was his calling early in his career to serve teachers and his aspiration to expand their reach to most effectively meet each new generation of students. WWH was also a Lincoln scholar, whom he admired as an advocate of learning. His favorite Lincoln quote "With malice toward none; with charity for all"⁴ graced a bust of Lincoln given to WWH upon his retirement by the Board of Trustees.

WWH was brought to Western to settle the school after the turbulent Fischer administration. "Within a year [Dr. Haggard] had a loyal and united faculty."⁵ He was a modernizer who, in 1949 advocated for a long-range plan to answer "what should curriculum, the staff, the enrollment, the plant be in the 1960s when the war babies come to college?"⁶ WWH answered this question over the next 10 years, as the school repeatedly expanded its curriculum, more than doubled the size and quality of the faculty and built WWCE's reputation. He was so successful in this effort that the WWCE was well positioned to become a state college within two years of his retirement.

¹ Paul Dunn to President Sabah Randhawa and the Board of Trustees, June 28, 2021.

² Philip Sharpe to President Sabah Randhawa and Chair John Meyer, June 30, 2021.

³ The materials cited in footnotes 4 – 7 are included in the William Wade Haggard Collection, Special Collections, Western Libraries Heritage Resources, Western Washington University (WWU). Thanks to WWU Libraries staff for their help.

⁴ From Haggard estate donation announcement. WWU Information office, July 17, 1978.⁵ Speech by Dr. Merle Kuder delivered at WWH's farewell banquet, May 20, 1959, pg. 3.

⁵ Speech by Dr. Merle Kuder delivered at WWH's farewell banquet, May 20, 1959, pg. 3.

⁶ Speech by WWH delivered at the Fall Quarter Faculty Banquet, October 26, 1949, pg. 7.

WWH built trust between his administration and faculty, students, legislative funders and local residents. He did this by being “present,” regularly walking around campus and meeting one on one with students and teachers. He attended all Trustee and legislative meetings personally.

As he wrote following his retirement, “It is always a pleasure to me to speak to and talk with individual students as I met them in the halls or on the campus. My door was always open to both faculty and students, also to the public.”⁷ He would often speak about his particular pride in the many successes of Western’s faculty and graduates.

WWH stayed involved with national educational associations in order to keep up on the pulse of the education industry beyond Bellingham. Through these efforts, Western was recognized by national accrediting organizations and selected for special study programs⁸. He was a credible and steady presence.

LRTF’s Assignment

President Randhawa, in his charge to the LRTF, asked members to consider whether “the behavior or legacy of the person for whom a feature is named compromise or conflict with the University’s mission, including both its commitment to intellectual integrity and its commitment to diversity ...”⁹ He went on to direct that “Regardless of whether Task Force makes a recommendation for renaming or maintaining the name(s), the advice should make a clear case for its conclusion by providing evidence, documenting the sources used, and explaining why those sources are reliable.”¹⁰

Task Force Report

At this moment in history especially, we would have expected the LRTF to produce a fair and exhaustive analysis of the found flaws balanced against our grandfather’s successes. That was not the case. We believe the Task Force’s report has a number of failings which cause it to fall short of President Randhawa’s direction.

⁷ WWH autobiography, ‘A Simple Story’ undated, pg. 20.

⁸ 1959 Klipsun, page 3, dedication to WWH, the year of his retirement

⁹ www.president.wvu.edu/task-force-charge, pg.1.

¹⁰ Ibid, pg. 2.

These include:

- Documentation of WWH's numerous contributions to WWCE is non-existent. Records related to his purported failings are nearly so.¹¹
- The LRTF missed numerous contradictions of its findings related to WWH's shortcomings.¹²
- The LRTF weighed evidence unevenly and demonstrated a willingness to draw speculative conclusions unsupported by the evidence.¹³
- The report hardly mentions WWH's many enduring contributions to WWCE, which are amply documented in Philip Sharpe's letter.¹⁴
- In a stunning lack of intellectual integrity, the LRTF "apply a standard that an individual's failure to address or remedy an injustice ... is morally equivalent with the individual's actively participating in an injustice."¹⁵

The Task Force appears to be grasping for reasons to strike our grandfather's legacy. We believe we must comment on the specific charges against him.

In regards to the picture of WWH with a Native blanket around his shoulders while attending a school skit, it is hard for anyone to be able to contextualize the situation even from the caption related to the picture. Was the blanket a gift? Was he asked by his students to support their

¹¹ With respect to WWH, the report references a few brief sentences from two oral histories and two newspaper clippings.

¹² These include:

- a. WWH's hiring of Eunice Day Lee [Faber] as the college's first African-American faculty member [Sharpe, pg. 18]. Moreover, Ms. Lee said that WWH made her feel welcome. [Jennifer Deshales, 'Black professor Eunice Faber files a discrimination complaint against Western Washington College in Bellingham on September 20, 1967' HistoryLink.org, Essay 21255, July 13, 2021, pg. 3.]
- b. That in 1953 Western was approved by the American Association of College Women, an organization devoted to promoting equity for women in higher education. WWCE was the first teachers' college in the northwest to be approved by the AAUW. [Western Washington Collegian, June 26, 1953, pg. 1.]
- c. WWH's prejudice against hiring of Catholic faculty is, apparently due to an opinion from Dr. Critchfield's oral history, yet English Professor James O'Brien, a Seattle University graduate and active member of Sacred Heart Catholic Church, as an example, was hired in 1946 [January 23, 2013 obituary].
- d. Contradicting recollections: PE teacher Patricia O'Brien [pg.1 oral history], "I came in to replace L. Vinal...." When asked why Ms. Vinal wasn't rehired, Ms. O'Brien replied that she *heard* it was because "... one time she (Ms. Vinal) had been smoking outside the building and that did not go over well with WWH", contradicting LRTF report that she was not rehired due to her age, [LRTF report [pg. 19].
- e. Presentation to the college of a miniature tribal racing canoe from a club devoted to the betterment of understanding and relations of Whites and Indians [Sharpe, pg. 19].
- f. LRTF charge that WWH did not allow varied political perspectives contradicted by a 1958 talk on campus by British journalist Felix Greene, in which Greene was "optimistic" about communist China and gave "students and faculty a refreshing and liberal look at Red China, its progress and future". [Western Washington Collegian, January 14, 1958, pg.1].

¹³ Dunn, pg. 1; Sharpe, pg. 16.

¹⁴ Sharpe, pg. 2 – 16.

¹⁵ Dunn, pg. 1.¹⁶ Legacy Review Task Force Report, June 14, 2021, pg 19, footnotes 44,45

cheerleading? One thing we know for sure, our Grandfather was not one to be silly or purposely discourteous. He may have been a prop for a skit but to assume his intentions were disrespectful is certainly not clear. As the award and display of a miniature tribal racing canoe at WWU indicates in Mr. Sharpe's research, our grandfather was regarded as a partner in Western's relationship with local tribes.

The charge that our grandfather did not use his bully pulpit to condemn the internment of WWU's Japanese-American student is not supportable. This was a very dark chapter in our country's history. However, by not finding evidence that he said anything supporting or opposing Executive Order 9066 cannot be a reason to condemn his lengthy legacy. We know for sure that it would have weighed heavily on him to have any of his students' education interrupted.

The nuanced hiring prejudice and diversity statements in the footnotes of the LRFT report are, again, not well supported (see footnote #12). There was no proven pattern of discrimination. The charge he lacked faculty diversity during his tenure was an unfair charge, as demonstrated by the hiring of Ms. Lee (Faber) in May, 1959, which was left out of the LRFT's research along with numerous inconsistencies around "concerns expressed by the Task Force" re: "not allowing varied political perspectives on campus and his hiring practices...".¹⁶

Conclusion

We are dismayed that the LRFT report will color how our Grandfather's legacy may be remembered. We believe Mr. Sharpe's research documents what WWH accomplished during his twenty years of service, doing what he was hired to do and improving the lives of student educators and countless students. Together with the additional evidence demonstrating inconsistencies in the research and evaluation of WWH, vastly overshadows the unsupported charges leveled by the LRFT and clearly does not meet President Randhawa's charge to "consider and weigh relevant factors."

We strongly urge the Board of Trustees to reject the recommendation of the Task Force on removing WWH's name from Haggard Hall.

Sincerely,

The children of Margaret Haggard Miller, Joan Haggard King and Wade S. Haggard

Gragg Miller, Norma Miller, Mary Miller McCluskey, Steve King, Mike King, Katie King Keller,
Suzanne Haggard, Lynne Haggard, Karen Haggard, Bill Haggard, Eric Haggard
Should you need to contact us, Gragg can be reached at millergragg@gmail.com

¹⁶ Legacy Review Task Force Report, June 14, 2021, pg 19, footnotes 44,45

