

September 3, 2021

Dear members of the WWU Board of Trustees,

Over the past year, I have worked with colleagues in the Western Libraries' Division of Heritage Resources to locate historical documentation and compile reports for the Legacy Review Task Force on the individuals for whom campus buildings are named. Recently, important additional information came to light regarding the legacy of President William Wade Haggard. I am writing to provide that information to you in the hopes that it will further inform your discussion of the Task Force's findings and recommendations.

In its final report, the Task Force stated that "there were no Black faculty at WWU while [Dr. Haggard] was President." As Philip Sharpe noted in his June 30 letter to you, this is incorrect. In fact, Western hired its first Black professor, Eunice Day Lee (later Faber), in 1959. I enclose an article about Professor Lee in which a Bellingham police officer in the 1950s is quoted as saying that "We don't have any use for colored people in Bellingham, and I'd give them the boot." The article goes on to point out that "Despite this underlying current of racism [in Bellingham], Lee said that WWSU President W. W. Haggard made her feel welcome and offered her an associate professorship."

It is unclear whether Haggard was directly involved in bringing Black speaker and athlete Jesse Owens to campus in 1958, but an original photograph in Special Collections (reprinted in the 1958 yearbook) shows the two of them shaking hands. Owens, of course, is remembered for his achievements at the 1936 Berlin Olympics (the so-called "Nazi Olympics"). Although Adolf Hitler snubbed him, Owens later complained that President Franklin D. Roosevelt also never congratulated him or invited him to the White House to shake hands, perhaps for fear of losing the support of Southern Democrats. It may be worthy of note that Haggard, a Southerner himself (although not a Democrat), was more gracious, again despite a local culture that was not especially welcoming towards people of color.

While it is open to debate whether Haggard deserves special personal credit for bringing Black students to Western in the 1940s and '50s, it should be taken into consideration that although Black enrollment at Western at that time was extremely small, it was higher than in the administrations of Haggard's predecessors, when, following the departure of Alma Clark, the school appears to have had no Black students at all. The 1948 *Klipsun* yearbook contains a photo that shows two Black students, one of whom is Susie Mae Modisett. Another photo from the same yearbook shows her brother, Clem Modisett, on the Western track team. According to his 2012 obituary, he was originally from Arkansas, where in the 1940s, as far as I am aware, there were no racially integrated collegiate sports, unlike at Western under Haggard's administration. In 1949 or 1950, Louise Collins, a Black student from Seattle, was elected to Western's Board of Control, the student governing body. Perhaps most significant of all, Western's first Black graduate, Willis Ball, earned his degree in 1958, during Haggard's time in office.

Although there were Asian-American students at Western when Haggard arrived in 1939, they seem not to have returned until several years after the Second World War. You may want to note, however, that in 1950, Marilyn Chow, a Chinese-American woman, was enrolled in the graduate school, three years after it opened. More research is needed to confirm that she was Western's first graduate student of color, but it seems likely, and even if it was someone else, this milestone was reached during Haggard's administration.

Another important milestone came in 1953, when Western was approved by the American Association of University Women, an organization devoted to promoting equity for women in higher education. Dr. Anna Rose Hawkes, Dean of Students at Mills College, spent three days visiting campus on the AAUW's behalf. According to the *Collegian*, the school newspaper, Western was the first teachers college in the Northwest to be approved by the AAUW. This fact, along with those above, may be helpful to you in determining whether it is accurate to say, as the Task Force's final report does, that "The institutional history during [Haggard's] tenure was... absent important markers of equity and inclusion."

I also enclose documentation to contribute to your discussion of whether "Haggard discriminated... perhaps more systematically, against Catholics." Special Collections holds the papers of English Professor James O'Brien, who began working at Western during Haggard's presidency. O'Brien, a graduate of Seattle University (Jesuit), and his wife Patricia, a teacher in the Campus School, were Catholics. And although at this point we can only speculate, it is also possible that Eunice Lee, Western's first Black faculty member, whom Haggard hired, was Catholic, given that she earned her graduate degree at Catholic University.

A newspaper article about a 1958 talk at Western by British journalist Felix Greene may merit attention in relation to the Task Force's statement that Haggard "bears at least some responsibility for the suppression of left-wing political perspectives on campus throughout his tenure." Whether Haggard approved of the talk or knew much about Greene is an open question, but clearly left-wing perspectives were not totally suppressed during his presidency. A favorable article in the *Collegian* states that Greene was "optimistic" about communist China and gave "students and faculty a refreshing and liberal look at Red China, its progress and future." It went on to state that "We must agree with Greene [that] anything today in China would be an improvement over the China of the first half of this century... Later, at a luncheon in his honor, Greene continued to describe Red China in glowing terms." Greene's later writings and film documentaries confirm his communist sympathies.

I am extremely appreciative of the important work that the Legacy Review Task Force engaged in, and I present these additional sources solely in the interests of historical accuracy and helping you reach a well-informed decision. Please let me know if I can be of assistance in locating further documentation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Taylor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent horizontal line above the first few letters.

Michael L. Taylor
Special Collections Librarian
Western Libraries, Heritage Resources