

Panel sought for University of Alabama's racial history

By Ed Enoch / Staff Writer

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The University of Alabama Faculty Senate is proposing the creation of a commission on race, slavery and civil rights to research and share the campus' history from slavery to its growth to a more diverse and inclusive institution.

The faculty senate approved the proposal on Tuesday during its regular meeting. The recommendation will be sent from the senate to the university administration. The administration will review the recommendation once it receives it, according to a university spokesperson Tuesday.

The proposal broadly lays out the philosophy and rationale for forming commission, said faculty senate member Amy Dayton, an associate English professor who co-chairs the Community and Legislative Affairs Committee that introduced the measure.

The commission would investigate the history of race, slavery and civil rights on the campus, publicize its findings and make recommendations for a plan to curate the history for teaching and promoting a dialog.

The commission would build on previous work to document campus history including historical markers on campus at the Little Round House, the slavery apology marker, Hood-Malone plaza and the historical marker for Autherine Lucy, the first black student to attend UA.

The work could have potential positive impacts on issues such as recruitment and retention of students as well as possibly lead to grant funding, said assistant history professor Hilary Green during a discussion of the proposal when it was presented during the September meeting.

Green, who has previously worked to document campus history related to slavery, said the creation of the commission would also position UA to continue in a leadership role among Southeastern Conference schools who are reflecting on their histories. The proposal is modeled on language from similar programs at other universities, she said.

“This is the next step to get us where we can say, ‘Hey Alabama is still leading,’ ” Green said in September.

The proposal outlines goals that include:

- Exploring the role of slavery and its legacy at UA
- Promoting research
- Creating infrastructure to support alternative campus tours
- Updating current tours with more complete information about the university’s history
- Exploring possibilities for additional markers and signs on campus
- Creating permanent displays on campus about slavery and civil rights history
- Making recommendations for additions to undergraduate curriculum and orientation programs
- Creating co-curricular activities for students
- Working with other groups doing similar work
- Securing public and private funding to support the commission’s work.

Dayton anticipates there will be ongoing discussions about the proposal, including the formation of the commission.

“There will still be opportunity on into the future because there will be a lot of things to talk about,” Dayton said.

Possible taskforce members suggested in the recommendation include faculty currently researching campus history, representatives from the senate, representatives from the university’s libraries and museums, UA Black Faculty and Staff Association representatives, the vice president of diversity, equity and inclusion, and representatives from the Division of Student Life.



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