

FAYETTEVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

by Demetrius Haddock
Guest Columnist

Wow, it's like clockwork. A name change for Fayetteville State University has once again reared its head. Every few years or so, FSU's "problem-plagued" name is put up for discussion about the "potential benefits." Well, how would the institution benefit from a name change?

It was 2002 when the discussion last seriously circulated publicly. The discussion circled around the alumni, who were not in favor, as having an "emotional decision" to make. Proponents believe that rising above that emotion to have a logical discussion about the benefits is what the university and the surrounding community need.

Well, let's do just that. But first, let's look



at how another institution's alumni and students responded to an apparent heavy-handed attempt to change its name.

In 1963, North Carolina State College faced a name change debate. Understandably, renaming the college to the University of North Carolina Raleigh was offensive to many alumni and students because it painted the wrong picture. In *William Friday: Power, Purpose, and American Higher Education*, it is suggested that the mere notion that NC State was in any way "subordinate" to UNC Chapel Hill, its arch-rival, was unacceptable. Thus, "a rebellion occurred in 1963-65" and by 1965 the state had adopted North Carolina State University at Raleigh, rejecting UNCR.

An acute observer may recognize that the NC State situation is not necessarily a fair comparison to FSU's. [NC] State College was upgrading from college to university status at the time, so a name change was inevitable. FSU has had its university status since 1969 when it was designated a regional university along with several other state HBCs and Pembroke State College. Since there is currently no status change per se, why does FSU continually face this name change issue?

Consider Pembroke State College which received its university status in 1969. Status notwithstanding, a name change was still considered and in 1996, the University of North Carolina at Pembroke stepped on the scene.

When Elizabeth City State University's name change was on the table in 2008 (UNC at Elizabeth City), it was suggested that they should look at how UNCP benefited from its name change. Chief among the benefits was a striking boost in enrollment.

Let's look. Over the decade following the 1954 Brown Decision, Pembroke experienced a surge in enrollment. However, that enroll-

ment, having been "opened up to all," was almost all white. Prior to the civil rights desegregation push, Pembroke served the American Indian population and suffered a severe lack of resources. The surge in white population offered significant infrastructure and funding advances – benefit?

Similarly, following the '96 name change to UNCP, a symbolic new opening occurred and the institution surged in enrollment from approximately 2000 students in the mid-90s to more than 6000 by 2009. According to Stateuniversity.com, the population surrounding Pembroke is approximately 85 percent American Indian, yet the institution's American Indian population has trended downward from around 25 percent in the mid-90s to less than 18 percent as late as 2009. Meanwhile the white population is nearly 45 percent – benefit? Is this the benefit that FSU can expect?

What's in a name? FSU is already a state university. It is already a constituent of the UNC System. It is the second oldest NC public institution of higher education. Most alumni, faculty, staff and students have an attachment not simply to FSU's name but to the hard work that many before us (current generation included) have endured to elevate the name. Despite sparse funding, inconsistent infrastructure support, and low public image, FSU has endured and is thriving. To succumb to external (or unappreciative internal) pressure would be a slap in the face to all the work done thus far.

Also, note that the individuals who argue for the name change offer little to no insight into what is currently "preventing" the institution from realizing the new potential that only a name change can bring. The name change is supposed to be a shortcut to more

resources. Bronco Pride will not allow for such shortcuts. Besides, will simply changing the name – in hopes of avoiding more work – really produce new opportunities? If so, why are these resources and opportunities not available now with the current name?

Is it a name change or an attitude change that is really needed? Name check aside, as all Broncos know, there must always be an "ATTITUDE CHECK!" Unlike NC State's resistance to a name change, FSU's resistance carries with it a racial element. So, this is an issue of race in a "post-racial" society – like it or not. When our society was racial, there were "racial factors" contributing to the "messy" condition of Black people. Now Blacks are atop nearly every negative category as it relates to disease, unemployment rates and death (particularly homicide). Claiming to be post-racial does not fix conditions overnight. Institutions like FSU play a very particular and important role in cleaning up the mess. We cannot allow for this vision to be blurred.

FSU's role today is as important to a healthy future for us all as it ever was. If there are truly resources available for the institution, invest them now. Valuing FSU – as it is – will be a huge step toward the post-racial claim. This will show that the "black" institution is okay without being "de-stigmatized" of its "inferior" past. That's the essence of diversity – respect for more than one group's history and right to self-determination. Hard work is what will make a better name for this institution. If you want to help, roll up your sleeves – for FSU!

Mr. Haddock is a FSU alumnus who graduated in 1998 with a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in 1999.

WHAT IS GOING ON?

Endowment Lecture Series

What: Lecture on economic policy
When: Today, 6 to 7 p.m.
Where: SBE, rm. 145

Career & Graduate School Fair

What: Employers & grad schools
When: Thursday, 1 to 4 p.m.
Where: Capel Arena

NAACP Membership Rally

What: Interested in NAACP?
When: Thursday, 6 to 8 p.m.
Where: SBE, rm. 116

A Girl's Fight

What: Miss Black & Gold Scholarship Pageant
When: Oct. 2, 6 p.m.
Where: Seabrook Auditorium
Ticket Info: cliffordaparker@yahoo.com

Workplace Rights

What: A forum about workplace rights and seeking unemployment
When: Oct. 12, 6 to 7 p.m.
Where: Top floor of Cook bldg

WIDU Gospel Celebration

What: WIDU hosts their 53rd anniversary Gospel celebration
When: Oct 8, 4 p.m.
Where: Crown Coliseum

Royal Comedy Tour

What: A night of comedy
When: Oct 14, 8 p.m.
Where: Crown Coliseum