

December 7, 2018

General Assembly of North Carolina
North Carolina State Legislative Building
Raleigh, NC 27601

UNC-Chapel Hill Board of Governors
UNC System Office
3916, 910 Raleigh Rd, Chapel Hill, NC 27514

**RE: Recommendation for the Disposition and Preservation of the
Confederate Monument**

Dear North Carolina General Assembly & the UNC Chapel Hill Board of Governors,

It is with extreme urgency that we write to you today regarding the recent four-part plan proposed to the UNC Board of Governors for the disposition and preservation of the Confederate monument known to many on-campus residents as “Silent Sam.” To be fully acquainted with the seriousness with which we take this matter, it is crucial that a rudimentary understanding of who we are is established.

The UNC-Chapel Hill Residence Hall Association (RHA) is not only one of the three largest student-run organizations on campus, but it is also part of a national association, founded in 1954, which has grown into the largest student organization in the world. For 45 years since the official founding of RHA we have been charged with representing the concerns of hundreds of thousands of residents who have lived on our beautiful campus. In writing this letter to you, we seek to run in accordance with our Constitution, By-laws, and mission statement. Namely, we hope to fulfill our duty to represent the concerns of on-campus residents and improve their overall residential life experience.

We are aware that many on-campus residents have expressed their concern with this plan that is projected to cost \$5.3 million upfront and \$800,000 per year.

We support these students. We believe Silent Sam is a symbol of white supremacy and racial oppression, which has no place on this campus. However, we, the Residence Hall Association, would like to focus our attention on the proposed location for the reinstatement of this confederate statue: Odum Village.

Odum Village is rich with a history that has helped build Carolina's reputation today. Built in 1963, Odum Village served as the on-campus site for family housing and was named after former Kenan Professor of Sociology, Howard W. Odum. Under Odum's leadership, UNC became one of the nation's leading institutions in the study of sociology and southern society. In line with the ideals of this public research university, Odum believed that research on social and economic issues prevalent in the south was vital to defining and shaping the culture of the southern United States. The subtle irony is that as of four days ago, the very social issues that Odum sought to address with our School of Social Work could be found knocking on his doorstep 55 years later.

According to Part 1 of the aforementioned four-part plan, Odum Village is the "next area of growth for campus." Previously, the goal was to make Odum Village a hub for South Campus activity - a welcoming place for **all** Carolina students to have fun, laugh, share, and make memories on campus. Instead, this four-part plan seeks to re-build Odum Village into a "University History and Education Center" to house Silent Sam and other "excellent exhibits and teaching materials" with "state of the art security measures." This decision would be the antithesis of what was planned and would garner more hostility and divisiveness on our campus.

Silent Sam should not stand in a place that represents the future of our University. Carolina should aspire to be a welcoming institution of acceptance and knowledge, which should not be represented by a symbol so virulent that it needs "state of the art security measures." While it is fair for many to argue that Silent Sam represents an important part of our history, none should argue that it deserves to represent our future. The hostile atmosphere that this statue bears represents the clashing of progressive and white supremacist ideals. If we, as a university, are to

truly reckon with our past, we must do so in the safest and most morally just way possible - and this does not include re-erecting a symbol of oppression on our campus. Furthermore, its presence has been a volatile rallying point for the gathering of both sides of this argument which may lead to a similar situation as what was experienced in Charlottesville. This rallying point at UNC may potentially put both on and off campus residents at risk of physical harm.

Advocacy is one of the four pillars of our organization and in advocating for all of our on-campus residents, including people of color, we cannot and do not support this proposal. Its proximity to Ram Village apartments 1, 2, and 3, Craige, and Craige North residence halls is more than enough to foster feelings of anxiety and unwelcomeness among the residents we represent. Not only do we foresee rates of on-campus housing decreasing in the future (particularly within the previously addressed residence halls), but the presence of this statue anywhere on campus, we predict, would fuel sentiments that are not only contrary to our organization's mission of improving residence life, but contrary to the mission of this university.

With that being said, we have taken note that relocating the Silent Sam statue to any location beyond the boundaries of our university's campus is not viable given that the university must operate under the current law ([N.C. Gen. Stat. §100-2.1](#)). This is why today, we write to you, the UNC Board of Governors and the North Carolina State Legislature regarding this matter. We are formally requesting that a swift legal effort be made to address this issue. Part 3, subsection C of this law indicates that an exception to this law applies should "an object of remembrance for which a building inspector or similar official has determined poses a threat to public safety because of an unsafe or dangerous condition." We ask that such an exception be made here.

The decades of racial tension and threats to safety brought by the presence of this statue on this campus have gone above and beyond what should be deemed appropriate by any public institution that claims to educate a diverse group of the best and the brightest individuals, not just from the state of North Carolina, but from

all around the world. The beauty and breadth of backgrounds, knowledge, experiences, and culture that each student brings to this campus are what makes the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill one of the greatest public universities in this country. With this Confederate monument on our campus, we cannot celebrate and support the diversity of students on our campus knowing full well that our administration and state has supported the re-erection of a statue that symbolizes white supremacy.

If an exception cannot be made to this piece of legislation, then we propose that this section be amended for the sake of the future of this university and for the physical and psychological well-being of the students we represent.

Sincerely,

Residence Hall Association Executive Board 2018-2019
Carolina Union, Box 5210
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill, NC 27599