

Statement Regarding Richard E. Vatz Auditorium (VB 204) Dedication

Towson University has announced plans to officially name Van Bokkelen Hall auditorium room 204 after Professor Richard E. Vatz in a dedication ceremony on Friday, December 9th at 10:00 a.m. Per TU representatives, Professor Vatz has worked at Towson University for over 20 years and has been a “generous donor” to TU’s philanthropic efforts.

Vatz is also the faculty advisor for Turning Point USA at Towson University. The announcement that he will have a room named in his honor is shocking, disappointing, and odious. While we acknowledge Vatz’s contributions to our community, we must not turn a blind eye to the harm he has helped nurture. As a long-time faculty advisor to student organizations smitten with hate, he has not upheld our university’s aim to foster a climate grounded in respect and inclusion. Respect and inclusion can not exist with hate.

Just last month, we celebrated the renaming of Harris and Barnes Hall, recognizing TU’s first Black graduates and validating our minority student experience. Renaming the auditorium after Professor Vatz does the opposite. Once a safe place for Black Greek Letter Organizations to gather and bring awareness to issues impacting Black students, VB 204 will no longer honor this historical significance.

We want to be clear that this decision was not made with the approval or knowledge of the four shared governance bodies (Student Government Association, Graduate Student Association, Academic Senate, or Staff Senate). We also want to note that the Policy on Naming of Facilities and Academic Programs (06-04.00) did not apply because VB 204 is a classroom, not a building, facility, or program. The university has policies around naming facilities, buildings, and programs but not classrooms or labs. This policy must be revisited to be more mindful of how we name all areas of campus, including classrooms, laboratories, and lecture halls to enrich the educational experience for all students. The naming of these spaces should be procedural and in alignment with the institution's mission, purpose, and values.

We hear and understand your concerns and the implications of this announcement. We will continue to be your voice and are actively working on raising this valid concern with the administration.

Dr. Desirée D. Rowe
Associate Professor, Department of Communication Studies
Chair, Academic Senate

Dr. Cole Reilly
Associate Professor, Department of Elementary Education
Vice Chair, Academic Senate

Dr. Pallavi Guha
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Jordan A. Colquitt
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Mayra M. Corea,
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Marcus Tuah
President, Towson University Graduate Student Association

Madison Paige, B.S
Vice President, Towson University Graduate Student Association

David Bauer,
Past President and current Vice President, Towson University Graduate Student Association

Additional Reference:

[Barnes Hall, Harris Hall honor Towson University's first Black graduates](#)

[Faculty members speak out against TU Turning Point adviser](#)

[Towson University Student Proposes To Start A White Student Union On Campus](#)

[Van Bokkelen Auditorium to be named after TU Turning Point adviser](#)

[06-04.00 – Policy on Naming of Facilities and Academic Programs](#)