PROPOSAL: University College Naming – Merze Tate College

Background

After taking into account suggestions from a campus-wide naming contest, research from environmental scans of similar units, input from several student-centered focus groups and surveys, and discussions with the University College staff, this proposal is being submitted to change the name of University College to Merze Tate College, in honor of distinguished alumna Dr. Merze Tate.

As a recent WMU news article noted, in addition to being the first Black student to receive a bachelor’s degree from Western State Teachers College, Tate also went on to become the first Black student to receive a doctorate from Oxford University. Dr. Tate’s journey also shares a number of things in common with today’s undergraduate students in general and our University College students in particular: a “resolve to boldly blaze her own path,” “fueled by a thirst for knowledge and boundless ambition.” Throughout her life, Tate pushed boundaries and challenged expectations through education and exploration, traveling the world as an educator, filmmaker, and researcher. Naming conventions including Tate’s name would make a powerful statement about the past, present, and future of WMU, consistent with University College’s new vision of championing a holistic and equitable experience so that all WMU students may thrive.

The unit name, Merze Tate College, supports and enhances the college’s vision while also providing the sense of “home” and belonging for WMU’s exploratory students, University Studies majors, and the many affinity groups and historically underserved students at WMU who feel lost or without a home, especially in our current historical moment.

Recommended Action

Change the name of University College to Merze Tate College.