

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES FACULTY AND STAFF SURVEY ON SILENT SAM

On Sept. 14, 2018, Dean Kevin Guskiewicz emailed a survey to all 2,060 faculty and staff affiliated in some way with the College of Arts & Sciences. Inviting thoughts, ideas and input that would contribute to Chancellor Folt's plan of action for the Confederate Monument, popularly known as Silent Sam, the survey was open-ended. It did not limit respondents to selected options, but rather let people propose options to pursue.

The three questions asked were:

1. Knowing what you do now about the history of Silent Sam and what this statue represents to different people, what would you like to see done with it and the site where it stood in McCorkle Place?
2. How do you think we can take this moment as an opportunity to lead and to teach—showcasing that this is what a great public university does best?
3. Do you have any other constructive feedback you would like to share on this topic?

This was not a scientific survey. Voluntary in nature, it nonetheless had a strong response rate of 19 percent. The quantitative analysis that follows is only for Question 1. (The other questions were too open-ended to analyze by this means. They are addressed in the qualitative summation that follows.)

The chief quantitative finding from the survey results is that *a substantial majority of the 400 respondents want to move the Confederate monument* (keeping in mind that the responses represented only one-fifth of those who received the survey).

We categorized the responses into five types:

- Relocate the statue off-campus to a museum or historic site: 37 percent of the responses fell into this category
- Display it somewhere else on campus: 26 percent of responses were in this category
- Withdraw the statue from public view with no commitment to future display: 23 percent of responses
- Permanently withdraw the statue from public view: 7 percent of responses.
- Restore the statue to its former location: 3 percent (11 responses total)

There was also an "Other" response category: 5 percent of respondents in this category did not clearly define a course of action to be taken in their survey answers. In a few cases, they offered a specific action—"dispense with the statue," for example—but then explained why that cannot be done. These commentaries review the clashing views, the difficulty of resolving them or the fraught environment on campus that precludes reasoned debate. (Note that the percentages above do not add up to 100 due to rounding.)

Some representative responses from each category are shared in the pages that follow.

Relocate the Confederate Monument Off-Campus

As noted earlier, this option received the largest number of responses. Many advocated moving the statue to a museum or historical site elsewhere in North Carolina or beyond. *"... the statue needs to be moved and housed in an appropriate museum. We learn from our history, the good stuff and the bad stuff so we can't act like this didn't exist or happen it just needs to be housed in a more appropriate space."* Such spaces exist in the state: *"The Levine Museum of the New South, in Charlotte, is a superb museum with an excellent exhibit on the civil rights struggle in North Carolina. I could easily imagine the statue there where there is both the security infrastructure and the museum know-how to give the statue a worthy new life as a pedagogical tool."*

Other locations suggested include the North Carolina History Museum in Raleigh, the new National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C., and Bennett Place, a historic battleground site in Durham.

An off-campus site allows a middle ground between those who want to discard the statue and those who wish it to remain as it was: *"I also think it is important to find a compromise with those who value the history associated with the statue. Therefore, I favor finding a suitable spot to house the statue—perhaps in one of the local museums, where it could be accompanied by signage that explains its significance, past and present."*

Display it Somewhere Else on Campus

This option received the second-largest number of responses. For some respondents, keeping Silent Sam on campus fulfills the University's duty: *"it should not be destroyed but perhaps put somewhere as a reminder of history."* Whether on display in Wilson Library, at the Ackland, or in a new *"museum-like setting,"* the Confederate monument helps Carolina reckon with its past: *"So if there is a place that can be found to tell the full history of the University and with context of time and place and players and culture and politics—that is what I would support. The confederate monument is but one piece of our history that led to the birth and bringing up of this University through slavery. Let's get it all out there and not focus on one statue."*

For many more, the history that Silent Sam testifies to racial violence and exclusion. An appropriate home on campus will help face the school's legacy of slavery and the Jim Crow South: *"it should be cared for and contextualized within as a product and emblem of many discourses of white supremacy and sexual violence."* *"As for the statue itself, clearly it has created a hostile working and living environment for members of our campus, leading some to favor its removal entirely from this campus, and I am very sympathetic to such a position. However, as a historian, I also feel strongly that the object, however odious, is also a part of the uglier history of this institution."*

Some couched their suggestion within a direction to attend carefully to African American faculty, staff and students: *"I think historical trauma that the statue has caused from the first African American students, faculty and staff to the present on campus has done untold damage. The sense that 'they' don't belong, are not a fully equal part of UNC and its life is true to this day. I've had many many conversations with students, faculty and staff (being Caucasian myself) who have expressed such alienation."*

For a few seeking a new statue location on campus, the Civil War and North Carolina's moment as a Confederate state matters. *"It should display Silent Sam somewhere along with its history, how it came to be, what it stood for. The fact is that many people of North Carolina were impacted by the Civil War. ... Many of these losses involved sincere people who made sacrifices for what they thought was best. Some of what they*

fought for was not good. Some of what they fought for was good. From the benefit of hindsight we can sort these things out."

A handful of respondents mentioned moving the statue to the cemetery that is on campus since it honors the fallen dead. Others note that relocation on campus will require security precautions that will keep the statue from disrupting campus life.

Withdraw the Monument from Public View—for an Indefinite Period or Permanently

Some respondents felt that the statue deserves no further contemplation as a war memorial, nor investment as an artifact for teaching about racism and civil rights. *"Destroy the statue. Destroy the pedestal."* *"Sam should be melted and turned into a monument for those that fought for racial and social justice."* *"I was raised in North Carolina, went to UNC in the 1980's and have been on the faculty for five years. My personal feeling is that Silent Sam should not be displayed in a public space at all."* *"This statue needs to be relegated to the dustbin of history."*

The rallying of extremists to Confederate monuments motivates some strong anti-display sentiments: *"The statue and its base should be removed and discarded. In some instances, removing such an item to a museum or other public space might be appropriate. But Silent Sam has taken on such meaning, it has become a rallying symbol for non-student actors who want to use it to fuel their anti-education, anti-UNC, anti-Black agenda, even if that agenda is disguised as being about "heritage" or 'history.'"*

Restore the Statue to its Former Location

Fewer than a dozen said they would like to see the statue put back: *"In my opinion the statue should be returned to its rightful place and kept there."* *"[R]einstall the statue where it was."*

Several sought restoration to repudiate the lawlessness of its removal: *"Put it back. Mobs cannot rule."* *"Let me state emphatically that I do not support historical censorship on campus and argue that we must leave the Silent Sam statue in place."*

Another respondent saw the statue as an emblem of the war, or more subtly as an icon of history writ large: *"The South was defeated, the North won, the war was over. President Lincoln moved forward and abolished slavery. This is history and we have learned from it and now we move forward. SILENT SAM SHOULD BE REPLACED ON THE PEDESTAL IN McCORKLE PLACE UNTIL THE END OF TIME. – PERIOD"* (emphasis in the original).

Other Important Takeaways

Beyond quantifying the responses into the categories above for Question No. 1, another approach is to look at some common themes that emerged from the survey. These are discussed below, with accompanying examples. These themes capture some of the viewpoints that were also expressed in response to the second and third questions on the survey.

Respondents Who Changed Their Viewpoint Through Education

A surprising number of respondents claimed that studying the statue's history convinced them it should not be returned. Many of these identified as white and Southern. These people seem especially important to highlight because they have been open-minded and persuaded through education, our university's bedrock purpose. Some examples:

"When I first saw Silent Sam I liked the idea the statue honored the sacrifice of individual students [but] "as I learned more about the history of the monument my feeling changed. Speaking to students I have learned how the statue serves as a constant reminder they are not welcome at UNC. We work hard to increase diversity but then the prominent presence of this statue at the entrance of campus sends a different message."

"Naively, I assumed that every Civil War monument was put up in the 1870s-1890s like most at Gettysburg. In the past few years I have learned that isn't true and there was a very less than well-hidden intent for those statues."

"When I first came to UNC (within the past decade), I thought it was a harmless statue of a bygone era. But in the last year or so, I started reading about the history of it from our own UNC experts, and realized what a hateful piece of propaganda from the Jim Crow era it really was."

"My initial reactions were (1) that we should not attempt to rewrite history, and (2) that removing a statue that honors fallen soldiers who have their lives in combat is inappropriate. Having read the speech that was made at the inauguration of the statue and having come to understand that it was part of a larger overall move to continue to suppress Americans whose [ancestors] had been slaves overwhelmed my initial negative reaction and I now believe it is even more inappropriate to leave standing a message intended to state dominance of one set of Americans over another."

"I was brought up in NC (I'm 73 years old and white) to revere the Confederacy and the South.... I saw Confederate Monuments as memorials to brave young men who fought for their homeland. But now, I see the awful meaning behind those monuments for people I care for, black people. It is hurtful to them."

These commentators demonstrate UNC as a thoughtful and open-minded academic community. These respondents sought education as a means to better understand the controversy around Silent Sam, allowing their understanding to change through the analysis of facts.

Respondents who Cited the University's Core Educational Principals (*Lux et Libertas*)

A large number of respondents argued that the administration should lead with more assertive and decisive actions by adhering to the ethics and imperatives of higher education. This approach, these respondents argued, would put UNC on the "right side of history" rather than equivocating on an issue in which scholarship has shown that the statue was and remains propaganda to support white, male supremacy.

Some examples:

"A great university is one that is not afraid of dialogue and controversy, but rather is open to change.... Admitting Silent Sam is an offensive reminder of a painful past for many, the university can learn and move forward in a way we can all celebrate."

“This is a great university that should represent ALL of NC, including people of color and the individuals that were traditionally excluded from higher education until the 1960s.... It is difficult to tell my classes that all voices matter and should be included, when Sam’s foundation still stands.”

“Education cannot be divorced from bold and effective leadership. It is a service, not a product. A great university leads ethically and intellectually.”

“We have so clearly NOT been leading and teaching; our administration has treated this as a PR matter and not a civic and ethical issue.”

“There is no place for a monument to the ‘lost cause’ on a campus that prides itself on lux et libertas.”

“A real university – that supposedly values history, research, and truth – does not let all stories have equal validity. It is simply not true to say that this statue is a benign honoring of fallen confederate soldiers, and it never has been.”

“How can we claim to be scholars if we can’t draw on scholarship to make this decision? We need to stand above the divisive politics... this statue has no place on a ‘global’ campus of the 21st century.”

“Nostalgia for a tradition of racism has no place in a forward-looking College and University. If the motto of the college wants to be ‘synergy unleashed’ an important step is to get rid of that statue and its pedestal.”

Respondents Who Cited the Damage to Campus and the Community’s Future Safety.

The third important theme appeals to the damage this statue has done to the UNC-Chapel Hill community (students, staff and faculty), and its contribution to creating a hostile work environment.

Many respondents argued that faculty of color should decide what happens to the statue (referencing a recent letter signed by many of them) because they have been the group most affected by its presence on campus. Others argued that recruiting top faculty and students will remain a problem as long as UNC does not exercise “decisive” leadership on this issue. Still others concluded that the statue symbolizes violence (historically and now) and will jeopardize the safety of our community until it is permanently removed. Some even evoked Charlottesville as an example of what could happen on UNC’s campus.

Some examples:

“The faculty are here for the long haul and we have seen the damage that the statue and the controversy around it has done to students of color and faculty of color, the immediate safety risks it has posed, and the negative reputational impacts it has had for our university.”

“I think it is imperative that there is an acknowledgement of the deep wounds that Sam brought people of color on this campus.”

“As I watched the news videos of our campus during two protests, my only reaction was horror at what I imagined our students of color were feeling.”

“This is not a ‘both sides’ issue. Black students, staff, and faculty say Silent Sam makes them feel unsafe. That should be enough to remove it.”

Conclusion and Recommendations

Taken together, these nearly 400 responses illuminate a few conclusions:

- (1) A large number of respondents advocated that the statue remain in a more historically appropriate place on campus but an even greater number believe that it should be removed from campus altogether. In analyzing the arguments within these responses, it seems clear that most of the people who advocated the former position (on campus, but elsewhere) would not have a strong objection if the statue were moved to an appropriate location off-campus, whereas the latter group (off-campus) would have strong objections to it staying on campus.
- (2) A small number of people argued that the statue should be destroyed or put into permanent storage. This group represents a small minority. It also does not seem apparent that this group would be dissatisfied with a resolution that put the statue off-campus and in appropriate historical context (for example, a museum setting).
- (3) A near-consensus emerges from these respondents that the university must take decisive leadership on this matter.
- (4) Because only a very small fraction of respondents voiced support for returning the statue to McCorkle Place, the statue should not be returned to its former location. Only 11 respondents advocated this approach, none of whom presented a cogent argument for this action. The respondents who said *"history must not be painted over"* unintentionally support the argument that putting the statue in a different location would allow for more historical context to be provided.

Those respondents who argue that we should *"Follow the rule of law"* failed to recognize that it was through civil disobedience that the Jim Crow laws were eventually overturned, as one respondent noted, citing William Chafe's book, *Civilities and Civil Rights*.

Some of the respondents who want Silent Sam restored to its old location gave credence to another respondent who wrote:

"I am struck by the fact that those who demand, insist, and threaten that the monument be restored to its former place appear to have NO interest in learning about the intention of those who erected the monument." Similarly, another wrote, *"Those in favor of having the statue stand have an empathy gap for the people who find it offensive."*

In conclusion, tolerating the continued presence of Silent Sam on our campus serves to elevate honoring the past over respecting the faculty, staff and students of today and their efforts to shape a more humane and inclusive future. Of the many suggestions offered up by our faculty, we believe that relocating it to Bennett Place, a state historic site and significant landmark in Civil War history, would be an appropriate destination for a Confederate monument. While we recognize that this issue is complicated, the monument has become a distraction that stands to jeopardize our continued status as one of the nation's premier public research universities. We do not support the return of Silent Sam to our campus.
