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March 20, 2020

TO: University of Virginia Committee on Names
FROM: Robert Pianta, Dean of the Curry School of Education and Human Development
SUBJECT: Executive Summary: Diligence process and recommendations related to naming

This memo summarizes the rationale, diligence, results, and recommendations that pertain to the review of two namesakes associated with the School of Education and Human Development: J.L.M. Curry after whom the school is named, and W.H. Ruffner, the namesake of Ruffner Hall. This process aligns to *EXT-004: Naming Policies for the University of Virginia*. Appendices referenced in this document include: A) Process Details and Further Basis for Recommendations; B) Materials Resulting from Diligence Process; and C) Stakeholder Reflections. In Appendix A, I provide greater detail related to the basis for my recommendations, which I outline below in this summary.

For the past two years, the faculty, students, alumni, Foundation Board, and other stakeholders of the school engaged in education and reflection related to Curry and Ruffner. This process was prompted by several factors mentioned here. 1) In each of the 13-plus years of my deanship I have fielded concerns regarding the school being named for Mr. Curry. 2) On occasion, African American faculty members in the school voiced to me concerns regarding Curry's statements on enslavement and enslaved persons, and challenges they experience working in a school named for him. 3) A small demonstration by University students disrupted an annual student awards event and criticized Mr. Curry and Mr. Ruffner for their support of enslavement. 4) Meetings with students and faculty referenced the demonstration and questioned using these names in association with the school and its mission. 5) The school engaged in a strategic planning process that also included branding and names. This led to adding "and Human Development" to the school name, which in turn prompted questions related to namesakes (i.e., Curry). 6) The school's mission—to ensure the developmental and educational success of all individuals—and our daily work in schools, clinics, and agencies, put our students and faculty into immediate contact with the realities of inequality in ways that call attention to the extent to which our branding and namesakes are aligned to our mission.

In fall 2018 I announced a review of the school namesakes, referencing University Policy EXT-004. I appointed an Ad Hoc Committee on Naming, co-chaired by Professors Robert Berry (Curry) and Susan Kools (Nursing) with representatives of our graduate and undergraduate student bodies, faculty, staff, the Curry Foundation Board, and University administration. The committee was charged to conduct a process of diligence related to the use of Curry and Ruffner as namesakes. They were explicitly instructed to focus on goals to promote education and reflection and not the generation of a recommendation.

The committee's primary deliverable is a website including: 1) brief biographical summaries of the two men and a timeline of historical events to set the context in which they lived; 2) reproductions of original documents used in the review; and 3) details of the diligence process. The committee also interpreted their charge to solicit stakeholder reflections. The website was distributed to alumni, faculty, students, staff, the school's Foundation Board, and friends on November 19, 2019. Below I provide the results of this diligence process, including: 1) a brief summary of the historical record associated with each of these men; 2) a description of the basis for my recommendations concerning the name of the school and one of its buildings; 3) a summary of the historical record associated with the life and work of University and School of Education graduate Walter N. Ridley, and 4) my recommendations.

Summary of the historical record: Curry and Ruffner

J.L.M. Curry. At the outset, as a matter of context, it is relevant to note that Mr. Curry had no direct affiliation with the University of Virginia whatsoever, not as student, faculty, or staff. His association is only as namesake for the School of Education and Human Development.

The principal basis for the school's naming for Mr. Curry is his leadership in forming a system of public ("mass") education in the Southern states following the Civil War. It is without question that the system of education that resulted from Curry's efforts immediately benefited many thousands of African American children who were formerly enslaved in those states and had benefits for countless others in the subsequent years. Mr. Curry's work undoubtedly was met with much resistance: a testament to his leadership, commitment, and perseverance. It has been noted by historians and his contemporaries that Curry, perhaps more than any 19th century U.S. citizen, promoted public education in the South. It is therefore understandable upon the founding of the University of Virginia's school of education in 1905, with a gift of \$100,000 from John D. Rockefeller, that his agent, Mr. John Gates, was instructed to suggest that the school be named for Mr. Curry.

Drawing from my colleague and former dean James Cooper's notes as well as the historical record, the argument for naming reflects Curry's role and success as a leader. *"He inspired legislatures to establish normal schools in twelve Southern states; create more and better rural schools, as well as elementary schools in a number of major cities. He made over 50 addresses to Southern legislatures promoting public education for both white and black children. In one year alone, he traveled over 17,000 miles in the South promoting public education. As Thomas D. Clark and Albert D. Kirwan, two 20th century historians stated 'Scarcely a major educational advance was to be made in the South between 1881 and 1902 that was not influenced in some way by J.L.M. Curry; in fact his name became synonymous with public education.'*" Dean Cooper also notes that *"had Curry advocated for integrated education in the South, it is almost certain that Southern legislatures would not have provided money for such an initiative. In other words, by appealing for money to support public education for whites and blacks to be educated separately, he advocated for and accomplished what was possible in that day and age."* Fundamentally the basis for naming the school for Curry, and the argument for retaining that name, is his leadership in expanding public education in the South, a notable accomplishment that very likely increased opportunities for generations of Black students that may not have otherwise occurred if public education did not exist. The diligence process undertaken by the Ad Hoc Committee on Naming recognized Curry's notable contributions fostering the expansion of public education opportunities in the South that included African Americans.

In contrast with this view on his contributions to educational opportunity, the diligence process also revealed other facts regarding Mr. Curry: 1) Prior to the Civil War Curry openly supported human enslavement and its importance to the Southern economy and lifestyle; 2) He held leadership roles that actively advanced human enslavement, including as a member of the Confederate Congress; and 3) He made numerous dehumanizing arguments containing derogatory speech that is antithetical to our school's mission and values. Of critical importance in evaluating his legacy relative to the naming of a school of education, is that post-Civil War Curry openly disregarded the Reconstruction amendments, argued against equality for formerly enslaved persons, and advocated for a two-tier system of public education, which arguably contributed greatly to the architecture of lasting educational, social, and economic inequality and disparities. Thus even as he championed public education, it is Curry's advocacy against equality of the races, in terms of human and civil rights, that must be given primary consideration in evaluating his place as a namesake.

The recommendation below, to remove Mr. Curry as a namesake, rests on this evaluation of Mr. Curry's overall record, and emphasizes his objections to equality and civil rights. That record reveals that Mr. Curry's principal legacy is a public education system that intentionally preserved structures of inequality and his advocacy of assumptions about human potential and rights that are antithetical to the mission of a contemporary school of education. Although one can argue that

without Mr. Curry's efforts formerly enslaved African Americans would have fared even more poorly than the record shows, it is also the case that his efforts and writings actively prevented their full assimilation into American society, reified inequality, and enabled the Jim Crow South. And as is mentioned earlier, Mr. Curry had no direct tie to the University of Virginia—he was neither student, faculty member, associate, or benefactor—nor were his writings on public education used to inform the school's principal mission at the time of its founding, of preparing educators.

W.H. Ruffner. Similar to Mr. Curry, W.H. Ruffner had no direct ties to the University as student, faculty, or staff. The one exception is that upon the passage of legislation forming the public education system in Virginia, Ruffner traveled to the University of Virginia, staying for two weeks to review and edit the legislation with University law professor John B. Minor. The final legislation and associated regulations created a two-tiered public school system that was racially segregated and centralized, with the superintendent and state board of education having supervisory control over all school matters. This is Ruffner's only known association with the University, and no archival records were discovered that described the rationale for the naming of Ruffner Hall.

Mr. Ruffner served as Virginia's first superintendent of public instruction; he assertively promoted and led the expansion of public education across the state. Ruffner also was a strong advocate for the return of enslaved persons to Africa and throughout his life argued for the inequality of the races in terms of innate abilities and character. As did Curry, Ruffner openly espoused views consistent with White supremacy even as he worked to expand access to public education for all children in the Commonwealth. These views are exemplified in his writings, one of which rebutted the argument for integrated education proposed in the Civil Rights Bill of 1874, "*With some small exceptions, the Africans are the lowest in the scale of races, while the white Americans ranked with the highest.*" Segregated education, he said, "*is not simply a matter of prejudice, of pride, or of taste. If all these could be overcome, there is a moral reason which of itself prevents co-education.... They move on a far lower moral plane than the whites, as a class...render(ing) it highly proper for whites to refuse to associate their children with them in the intimate relations of a school.*" The intersections of Ruffner's leadership in advocating for public education that benefitted all children with his views on the inequality of the races is evident in a February 1880 address to the National Educational Association. After arguing for additional funding for public education and recognizing segregation's contribution to that inadequacy, Ruffner stated, "*It is idle for anyone to suggest a mixture of the races. It can't be done. We must educate in separate schools, or not at all.*" Importantly, the basis for Ruffner's support for a separate public education system for Blacks, focused on learning a trade rather than intellectual growth, was his fundamental belief in the superiority of Whites. Ruffner clearly was a firm believer in strong fiscal support for public education. Analysis of the entirety of his writing and work, including in his role as superintendent of public instruction, suggests that

segregation was his priority, given his views on the inferiority of Blacks. Again, Ruffner had no direct ties to the University as student or faculty or staff, and no archival records were discovered describing the rationale for naming Ruffner Hall.

Analysis and basis for recommendations

In evaluating the merits of Curry as a namesake for the University of Virginia's school of education, and Ruffner for one of its buildings, I have referenced University policy EXT-004, the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Naming, the accompanying original documents, and more than 200 reflections submitted by stakeholders, which contain a mixture of impressions notable for their thoughtfulness and appreciation of complexity. I also reviewed the principles on naming established by Yale University as they considered the naming of Calhoun College for John C. Calhoun, as well as principles and procedures used by universities in other naming reviews, including Harvard, Stanford, and the University of Texas at Austin. These principles emphasize continuity and tradition, the importance of a namesake's ties to the university, preservation of history and memory, and the possible benefits and harms of changing or retaining a particular name. More specifically, we can be informed by statements in the Yale report related to the role and importance of naming for a University.

"A university ought not erase the historical record. But a great university will rightly decide what to commemorate and what to honor, subject always to the obligation not to efface the history that informs the world in which we live.... This last point directs us to one further observation at the outset. The University is rightly a guardian of academic freedom. This is so even when, and indeed especially when, academic freedom leads scholars and students, as [C. Vann] Woodward put it, to "think the unthinkable, discuss the unmentionable, and challenge the unchallengeable." The names on the University's buildings, however, perform a different function. They do not mark the boundaries of permissible speech on campus. The decision to change a building name is emphatically not a decision to remove a book from a library, change the contents of a syllabus, strike an idea from a course discussion, or rule out a dining hall conversation. In its building names and its campus symbols, the University communicates values, confers honor, and expresses gratitude to those who have contributed to its mission. In other words, the University itself speaks through its building names. In its role as speaker, the University need not, and ordinarily will not, express the unthinkable ideas that it is obligated to protect and foster in its capacity as guarantor of the academic freedom of its faculty and students. To the contrary, when the University speaks, it chooses its message in light of its mission, just as it has chosen its messages for more than three centuries. One of the values the University rightly communicates is the importance of genuine inclusiveness for all those who will make it a leading center for research and teaching in the years to come."

Naming is a binary decision, not given to nuance or complexity, and under the present circumstances may not be solved easily or simply by an effort to weigh and balance the “good and bad” elements of a complicated and contradictory historical record to produce an answer. Consistent with the principles outlined in the University’s policies as well as those of Yale, Stanford and other institutions that have faced these questions, ultimately naming must rest on alignment to a school’s mission and aspirations. In this way, it is extraordinarily important to emphasize that the fundamental mission of the University of Virginia’s *School of Education and Human Development*, enacted in our scholarship, teaching, and professional preparation, is to engage tangibly and deliberately with racial, social, economic, and cultural inequities. More importantly, our scholarship, professional preparation programs, students, and areas of academic work all have a principal aspiration to reduce inequality in systems of education, human services, and health. Every day our faculty and students devote their personal and professional resources to addressing the consequences of structural racism, economic inequality, and the forces that create stunningly unequal opportunities for individuals to realize their potential. Inherent in all our activity, and our mission, is a singular and unequivocal belief—that *all* individuals are equal in their potential for learning and flourishing, and all our efforts must be devoted to promoting that potential in everyone we serve.

In this way, our mission, aspirations, and efforts stand in direct opposition to and must confront the very nature of the systems of education architected, formed, and promoted by Curry and Ruffner. Both men actively promoted beliefs about the inferiority of Blacks, argued against equality and civil rights, and resisted the Constitutional amendments concerning Reconstruction. Thus, even though their efforts and success in expanding public education were laudable and deserving of recognition, their work and the basis they articulated for it actively and intentionally preserved unequal structures and assumptions about persons that are dehumanizing and antithetical to the mission and aspirations of a contemporary school of education.

In the course of the diligence process, historical summaries were shared with stakeholders of the school to solicit their reflections. Below are samples of reflections from current students and alums regarding these namesakes.

It is hard to give my reflections as so much is going through my mind. Receiving my M.Ed. from the Curry School was one of the highlights of my educational career. I feel less proud of that moment as an African American female and educator after reading this biography. It is much harder to be proud when I feel like my association with UVA has been denigrated by "support" of someone with this history by naming a building after them. The idea that I should have the right to be educated but that white people should ultimately have control of it makes me sad.

We explicitly state that it is our intention to “seek opportunities to expand diversity at our school through recruitment, retention, teaching, research and service.” If we are to achieve the goal of a community that promotes and values diversity and equity, how can we continue to honor the names of men who were committed to white supremacy? I believe the names of the school and the building should be changed to honor individuals whose work is aligned with our 21st Century mission and values.

I taught...for three years after graduating from the Curry School, and the main thing that struck me was how segregation still takes place in our community today..... Almost [all] of my "general education" level students were poor and many were African-American, while my "honors" students were predominantly affluent and white. While we are still struggling with the effects of segregation...the Curry School could at least stop tacitly supporting the segregationist policies of its namesakes by keeping their legacies alive. a former Alabama politician and a man who created Virginia's segregated school system!

These are among the 209 reflections submitted by school stakeholders which highlight the perspectives of students and alumni. These reflections also include Mr. Cooper’s letter, which I referenced previously. Appendix C contains the full record of reflections submitted.

In sum, on the basis of a fundamental lack of alignment with our school’s mission and aspirations, I am convinced that the proper response is to remove the Curry and Ruffner names from their current role. I emphasize that we will pursue our plans to recognize thoroughly their contributions to public education through other means.

I also recommend the recognition of University and Curry School of Education graduate Mr. Walter Ridley, through the renaming of Ruffner Hall as Ridley Hall. Ridley was a trailblazing educator and leader, an inspirational figure to whom we hope all of our graduates will aspire. I summarize below the historical record on Mr. Ridley, drawn from the University’s archives as well as those of Elizabeth State University.

The case for Walter Nathaniel Ridley

Ridley’s record and accomplishments. Walter Nathaniel Ridley, the first African American to receive a doctoral degree from the University of Virginia, or any traditional Southern white college or university, became the fifth president of Elizabeth City State College on September 1, 1958. He was one of eight children born to John Hoskins Ridley and Mary Haywood Ridley after the family moved from North Carolina to Newport News, Virginia in 1896. His father was a Louisburg, North

Carolina native and the son of an emancipated slave. John Ridley spent his career working in the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company; he was also one of the founding officers of Crown Savings Bank. Walter's mother, Mary Haywood Ridley, was a musician who taught piano. Walter Ridley was born on April 1, 1910, and passed away on April 1, 1996.

Mr. Ridley was educated in the public schools of Newport News, and earned his bachelor's and Master's degrees in psychology, *cum laude*, from Howard University in 1931 and 1933 respectively. A member of the Kappa Alpha Mu Honor Society at Howard, he later served as its National president for several years. He found work as a case worker for the Federal Emergency Relief Agency in Washington, DC between 1933 and 1934, and then became an educational advisor to the Civilian Conservation Corps in Pennsylvania and Maryland in 1934 – 1936.

In 1936 Walter Ridley's service as an educator began at Virginia State College in Petersburg, Virginia, teaching psychology and heading the extension department. After his marriage to Henrietta E. Bonaparte, he was determined to earn a doctorate, but the only institution in the state of Virginia which granted such degrees was the University of Virginia. He sought admission more than once and was denied, despite his protestations that, "My father has paid taxes in this state since before I was born and I am entitled to study here".

The state of Virginia paid Mr. Ridley a subsidy to leave Virginia and study at the University of Minnesota during 1939-1940 and at Ohio State University in 1941. He led the Psychology Department at Virginia State in 1943. He returned to classes in Minnesota in 1945-1946 and began research for his dissertation on the question of whether audio-visual materials used in schools contained content which would be deleterious to black students.

After suffering a hemorrhage in his eye, he was advised by doctors to discontinue his research and returned to Virginia. Shortly thereafter he was visited in Petersburg by Dean Stiles of the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia, which had recently decided to recruit black students who were "highly likely to be successful". Mr. Ridley applied and in 1951 was quickly accepted. Ridley earned the Doctorate of Education degree from the University of Virginia in 1953, the first African American graduate of the University, with high honors as a member of Kappa Delta Pi honor society at UVA. His pioneering achievement in desegregating the University of Virginia was noted in the national and international press. His years at UVA did not appear to be marked by open resistance to his presence or the violence that occurred some years later when other African

Americans broke color barriers at other Southern institutions. After 21 years at Virginia State, Ridley left in 1957 to become academic dean of St. Paul's Polytechnic Institute in Lawrenceville, Virginia.

In 1958 Ridley began what he regarded as his most significant academic work, that of president of the small, Black, Elizabeth City State Teachers College. During his 10 years as president, Dr. Ridley presided over a significant growth of the school's enrollment, campus and academic standing, laying the groundwork for its inclusion as a constituent institution of the University of North Carolina General Administration in 1969. Between the years of 1959 and 1963, under Ridley's administrative leadership, the institution expanded from the one elementary education major offered to 13 academic majors. The number of faculty PhDs increased markedly, and the number of students went from 400 in 1958 to 1,013 in 1965. The school achieved full accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools for the first time in 1961, on the condition that it continued its growth and improvement.

Mr. Ridley also made sure during his years as president that the traditionally Black college admitted its first White student. Ridley's tenure at the school coincided with a turbulent period of social unrest and the ignition of the civil rights movement in America. He was outspoken in his work focused on education and equity. When named "Tar Heel of the Week" by the *Raleigh News and Observer* in 1964, he took that opportunity to observe that North Carolina had "...a racial climate with more problems and more possibilities" than anywhere else in the South. And in a speech to the student body he observed, "*Schools are not equal in a democracy. Southern schools are not equal to Northern schools; rural schools are not equal to city schools; and Negro schools are not equal to white schools...we must catch up to the other schools, and all students must have the opportunity to take responsibilities because this is a part of a democracy*".

As President, Ridley expressed clear demands for change, to both the state administration in Raleigh and to faculty and students on campus. He had high expectations and emphasized rapid progress to lift the school out of the post-Civil War era. After his 3.5 million dollar capital improvement request for funding a dormitory, library, and classroom space, was reduced to 1.6 million, 1.1 million of which would have to be repaid, he declared in the April 21, 1963 *Virginia Pilot*: "*We are to repay through hikes in student fees of over \$100. That's where the rub is. We can't do it... No place or opportunity should be denied any American citizen. My efforts are bent toward preparing American citizens so there will be no question about their deserving any place or opportunity*".

After resigning the presidency of Elizabeth City State College in 1968, Dr. Ridley returned to the classroom as a professor and department chair at Pennsylvania's West Chester University. He earned the designation of "Professor Emeritus" at the end of his service to West Chester, and was honored with the designation of President Emeritus of Elizabeth City State University in 1988.

The breadth of Walter Ridley's educational service is indicated by his affiliations, honors and publications. He was a charter member of the United States Commission on UNESCO in 1946, served on the Antioch (Ohio) College Board of Trustees, and was a member of the corporation of the Save the Children Federation. He was a ten-year member of the CIAA Presidents Council, serving as president for four years. His numerous professional affiliations include the American Teachers Association (president and treasurer); the National Education Association; Council on Psychological Resources in the South; Alpha Kappa Mu, national president; Virginia Association of Mental Health; American Psychological Association; and Association of University Professors.

Analysis and basis for naming recommendation. Walter Ridley was the first African American graduate of the University of Virginia, receiving a doctoral degree from the School of Education. As the very first Black student at the University he undoubtedly faced numerous challenges and forms of resistance; the record shows he acted with grace and equanimity during his time here. His academic record was exceptional. Following his time at the University he led higher education institutions in the South and sought to integrate traditionally Black institutions by including White students. He was a champion for equality of educational opportunity and for increasing opportunity for all. His leadership at Elizabeth City State College transformed the institution; his leadership on behalf of higher education in the state of North Carolina was forceful in the face of numerous challenges. It is abundantly clear from the historical record that Walter Ridley was a pioneering leader in education; an open promoter of education for all individuals, regardless of race or ability; and a contributor to the strengthening of numerous institutions that served educational and academic causes. Mr. Ridley, and his career, exemplify the mission and aspirations of a school of education.

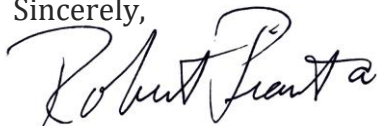
Recommendations

Drawing upon the summaries and analysis resulting from the diligence process presented above, recommendations should be anchored in University policy. As *EXT-004* emphasizes, this review and recommendations should be informed by the *Principle of Pedagogy*—names should serve as a "projection of aspirations....and decisions to name should attend to the full historical record." The *Principle on Commitment*, emphasizes that "a name is consistent with the pedagogical purposes and

community values of the University.” Furthermore, the policy’s *Honorific Naming Requirements* state that namesakes should “demonstrate virtues the University hopes its students will emulate...and the University’s mission related to inclusion and diversity.” Finally, honorific naming is not considered perpetual or permanent in nature. Thus, it is my recommendation that:

- 1) J.L.M. Curry be removed as namesake of the school, which will be named the “University of Virginia School of Education and Human Development.”
- 2) Ruffner Hall, named in honor of W. H. Ruffner, be renamed as Ridley Hall in honor of Walter Ridley, the first African American to receive a doctorate degree from the University of Virginia and a graduate of the school of education.
- 3) Curry and Ruffner will be honored for their contributions to public education through memorial plaques and exhibits installed in Bavaro Hall.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Pianta". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "R".

Robert C. Pianta, Dean

*Novartis US Foundation Professor of Education
and Professor of Psychology*