

From: President of Pomona College <President@POMONA.EDU>
Sent: Tuesday, October 6, 2020 12:58 PM
To: Faculty-Announce <Faculty-Announce@listserv.pomona.edu>
Subject: [Faculty-Announce] New Name, Enduring Mission

President G. Gabrielle Starr

Dear Pomona College Community:

Since it was entirely rebuilt in 2015, Millikan Laboratory has become one of the most active and important academic buildings on campus, with its distinctive domed planetarium, open and light-filled design and, most importantly, the constant presence of professors and students, often working into the night.

Pomona's bustling home for rigorous intellectual engagement in math, physics and astronomy offers a constant reminder of why we are here, and it is a place I am eager to see full again when the pandemic crisis recedes.

The one thing that will be different, though, is the name for this vibrant space.

The original Millikan Laboratory was built in 1958 as a gift from Frank R. Seaver, a graduate of the Class of 1905 who was a longtime trustee and generous benefactor of the College. Part of the Seaver complex of science buildings – a gift that pushed Pomona forward in so many ways – this particular structure was named for Robert A. Millikan, a Nobel-Prize winning physicist at nearby Caltech, and it's clear that the name was chosen at the time to represent excellence in the physical sciences.

In recent years, however, troubling information has come into sharper focus regarding Millikan's role in supporting the deeply disturbing practice of eugenics. He was a trustee of the Human Betterment Foundation, which pushed for laws leading to the forced sterilization of thousands of people. In books and papers, researchers have documented how the American eugenics movement influenced the Nuremberg Laws and the Nazi codification of anti-Semitism in the years leading up to the Holocaust.

The reality of Millikan's support for eugenics confronts us as colleges and universities nationwide are working to come to grips with long-past naming decisions.

As members of our community raised their concerns, I convened an advisory

committee comprised of trustees (Nathaniel Kirtman III '92, Allyson Aranoff Harris '89), faculty (George Gorse, Ami Radunskaya and Samuel Yamashita), staff (Craig Arteaga-Johnson '96) and a student representative from ASPC (Amanda Mutai '20) to offer me guidance on the issues surrounding the naming of buildings now and in the future. Their work took just slightly more than a year, and I am grateful.

I received their counsel in the summer. After a process of consultation and at the request of the Seaver family, joined with the support of the Board of Trustees, I am writing to announce the Millikan name will be removed from 610 N. College Ave.

A new name for this important campus building will honor Frank Seaver's parents, Mary Estella and Carlton Seaver, and their role in advancing Pomona College in particular and higher education in general.

Moving to the Pomona Valley in the 1880s, the Seavers planted orange groves and purchased an interest in the fledgling Pomona Valley Bank, with Carlton serving as its first president until his retirement in 1899. All six of the Seavers' daughters and sons graduated from Pomona College and pursued further education after graduation, going into fields ranging from the arts to law to medicine.

Not only did the Seavers send all their children to college, but they also initiated an academic legacy that has carried on for generations. Just one example: Their granddaughter Barbara Seaver was the top-ranked student and only woman in Stanford's 1946 graduating class of engineers. Countless Ph.D.s, medical doctors, teachers and other professionals received their initial training in state-of-the-art facilities made possible by Mary Estella and Carlton Seaver.

A final question remains: What should the Ms. Mary Estella Seaver and Mr. Carlton Seaver Laboratory be called in day-to-day usage? The easy answer is Seaver East, since it sits across College Avenue from Seaver North and South. However, I may suggest Estella, which derives from the Latin stella (star), a perfect fit for the building that houses physics and astronomy and a place where rigorous inquiry and flourishing for all members of our community remain the guiding lights.

Thank you to everyone who raised their voices and contributed to this change. We will celebrate the new name – and the vital work that goes on inside this building every day – at a future date.

With best wishes,
Gabi

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