



July 1, 2020

To: Indiana University President Michael McRobbie, Provost Lauren Robel, Vice President James Wimbush, Vice Provost Eliza Pavalko, and Vice Provost John Nieto-Phillips

We are writing on behalf of Concerned Scientists @ IU (and its student affiliate organization, Advocates for Science @ IU), a grass-roots, non-partisan community and campus organization comprising over 1200 members—scientists, students, and supporters of science—from the south-central Indiana region. Concerned Scientists @ IU is dedicated to strengthening the essential role of science in public policy and evidence-based decision making. In recent days, we, and every other preeminent scientific society and advocacy organization, have committed our organization to work to ensure that the opportunities and benefits of science are shared equitably for the betterment of all in society, and that dignity, equity, diversity, and opportunity become fundamental cornerstones of our work as scientists and as advocates for science.

With this letter, CSIU adds their voice to the growing chorus advocating for changing the name of Jordan Hall. We want to emphasize that the proposed name change is not just the right thing to do given recent developments, it would be the right thing to do under any circumstances. This issue is not just a local one; Stanford University has recently formed a committee to review a request similar to the one you have been considering from the Department of Biology. We welcome President McRobbie's announcement of the formation of a University Naming Committee to "begin a systematic review of all named buildings or structures on all campuses of Indiana University". As detailed below we feel that in the case of Jordan Hall the evidence supporting such a renaming is overwhelming and encourage the committee to move quickly and decisively.

David Starr Jordan was an ichthyologist, evolutionary biologist, and a president of Indiana University. During his tenure as president, he increased enrollment and created a course system that laid the foundation for the teaching of liberal arts at IU; this will remain a part of our shared history. His ichthyological legacy lingers in the 30 or so species of fish named after or by him, from *Agonomalus jordani* to *Teixeirichthys jordani*. However, Jordan was an unrepentant, and early and vigorous, proponent of eugenics, the author of books with titles such as *The Blood of the Nation: A Study of the Decay of Races, through the Survival of the Unfit* (1902/1010). That book has become noteworthy in the history of eugenics for the comparison Jordan offers between humans and cattle: "*In the herd of cattle, to destroy the strongest bulls, the fairest cows, the most promising calves, is to allow those not strong or fair or promising to become the parents of the coming herd. Under this influence the herd will deteriorate.... If we sell or destroy the rough, lean, or feeble calves, we shall have a herd descended from the best.*"

For Jordan, such ideas were not simply academic exercises, limited to the confines of the lecture hall or the pages of his publications; he strongly advocated that his ideas be carried into the policy arena. He chaired the first U.S. eugenics organization (as part of the American Breeder Association) and his research provided the rationale for the state's and the world's first compulsory sterilization law in

1907. By some accounts, around 2,500 Hoosiers were subjected to sterilizations under the auspices of two laws inspired by Jordan's advocacy. It is estimated that about 64,000 people nationally were sterilized under the auspices of a theory Jordan propagated.

Jordan was an unabashed racist. During his time at Indiana University, he gave a commencement speech, "*The Duty of the Scholar towards the Community*," to discount the idea of Black participation in government: "*It was not that our Southern states should be better governed, that three millions of freedmen, little more intelligent in the mass than the dog and horse with which a few years before they had been bought and sold, were given the right to vote*" (June 6, 1888). Racial purity, as Jordan explains in *The Heredity of Richard Roe* (1911), is the prerequisite for nation-building. This view also induced him to argue against immigration, under siege once again today, which Jordan regarded as "*the overflow to our shores of hereditary unfitness.*"

A frequent argument presented against such name changes is that they support an erasure of historical context. Jordan's views are widely available, and the discussion of his involvement in the sorry tradition of American eugenicist thinking will not come to a grinding halt because we rename a building. But we firmly believe that naming a building honors the entirety of someone's legacy. As scientists and supporters of science, we believe that scientific work cannot be separated from a moral commitment to the betterment of the world. Jordan abused his public office and authority as a scientist to propagate views that irretrievably damaged and, in many cases, ended the lives of thousands of human beings.

In this moment, Indiana University has the opportunity to remove David Starr Jordan's name from one of the most highly trafficked buildings on its campus. We encourage the University Naming Committee formed by President McRobbie to move swiftly, share its timeline and deliberations publicly, and by doing so, make a statement that the current views and values of the institution are those that support a diverse and inclusive environment, for all.

Signed:

Dr. Irene Newton

Dr. Christoph Irmscher

CSIU Steering Committee members

Submitted on behalf of *Concerned Scientists @ IU*