May 4, 2012

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. R. Bowen Loftin
    President

SUBJECT: CBE Recommendation: Texas A&M Campus Plaque Policy

At its April 10, 2012 meeting, the Council for the Built Environment (CBE) discussed a request from the Design Review Sub-Council (DRsc) to review and accept their proposed Texas A&M Campus Plaque Policy. The policy covers plaques in a major focus location and does not apply to those displayed in offices or departments; the CBE recommended that the policy wording reflect this distinction. It was noted that the wording of the policy has been reviewed and approved by the Office of the General Counsel.

The CBE voted unanimously to recommend the President’s approval of the Texas A&M Campus Plaque Policy with the clarification that the policy applies to plaques in major focus locations.

Kathryn L. Watson
Provost and Executive Vice President
for Academic Affairs
Co-Chair, Council for the Built Environment
Date

Rodney P. McClendon
Vice President for Administration
Co-Chair, Council for the Built Environment
Date

R. Bowen Loftin
President
Date

cc: Sub-Council Chairs, Council on the Built Environment
Texas A&M Campus Plaque Policy

This policy is meant to guide the consideration and recommendation on the wording proposed for use on plaques permanently displayed on the Texas A&M University campus. This policy covers plaques in a major focus location and does not apply to those displayed in offices or departments. A **commemorative plaque** is a stand-alone item that serves to remind viewers of some person, group, event, act, or ideal (hereafter referred to as object of commemoration). An **interpretive plaque** accompanies and explains another commemorative item, such as a statue, picture, fountain, or flag display. Where wording is proposed as an integral part of a work of art or other object, this policy will guide consideration of its acceptability.

This policy is not meant to guide evaluation of proposed objects of commemoration, but the Design Review sub-council will consider the impact of all such proposed objects against the intent of the Campus Master Plan to ensure that “the quality of the campus’s physical environment should reflect the spirit and quality of the students and faculty.”

In evaluating the content of proposed plaques erected on campus it must be understood that such plaques and their content are university speech. This policy will yield to all relevant constitutional law.

This policy shall only govern the placement of plaques proposed after its adoption; pre-existing plaques shall not be subject to review and application of this policy.

A plaque concept must have the written support and approval of an appropriate university vice president(s) prior to submission by the Design Review sub-council.

Commemorative and interpretive plaques shall:

1. Identify the object of commemoration.
2. State the date the commemorative plaque or interpretive plaque and interpreted item were erected.
3. Briefly indicate the significance of the object of commemoration. Significance includes a description of its meaning and an explanation of its importance for Texas A&M University. The donor may, however, propose the exact text. Text should in all cases conform to the following criteria. Adherence to these criteria shall not be interpreted as an entitlement to place the plaque without first obtaining the approval of the Design Review sub-council.
   a. Maximal concision should always be the aim.
   b. Controversial historical, political, and philosophical claims should be avoided. A controversial claim is one that a sizable number of Texans would likely find shocking or offensive.
   c. Quotations from political figures should express non-partisan rather than partisan interests.
d. Quotations from religious texts are not prohibited, but should satisfy the following criteria.
   i. The quoted passage should not advance a doctrine unique to any particular religious tradition. It should state a proposition that all religious traditions, including no religious tradition, can recognize as true.
   ii. The quoted passage should be directly relevant to the object of commemoration, and should improve the reader’s understanding of the significance of that object.
   iii. The quoted passage should be of recognized historical significance and literary merit.

e. Quotations should be attributed in a manner the Design Review sub-council determines is conventional.