Indiana University Historical Markers
UA-11

About This Policy

Effective Dates:
11-15-2016

Last Updated:
10-12-2021

Responsible University Administrator:
President, Indiana University

Policy Contact:
James Capshew
University Historian

Scope

All Indiana University campuses.

Policy Statement

1. Historical markers are managed by the institution to note historically significant topics, including:
   a. People
   b. Places
   c. Events
   d. Organizations
2. The University Historian and the Office of the President staff will review all nominations for historical markers.
3. The University Historian and Historical Marker Committee will utilize the following criteria to determine if a topic warrants the installation of a historical marker on one of IU’s campuses or related sites:
   a. The topic notes extraordinary
      1. University achievements
      2. Intellectual, scientific, cultural developments
      3. Contributions and service to society
   b. The topic has a demonstrable impact on the university and the wider region, nation, or world.
   c. The topic will widen and deepen public knowledge of IU history.
   d. A topic must have inherent significance beyond popular appeal. The mere existence of an entity will not qualify.
   e. Other avenues of recognition should be pursued before nominating a topic for a historical marker. This includes university alumni awards, faculty recognition awards, honorary degrees for living individuals, internal and external facility names, and other university recognition programs.
4. Waiting Periods
   The University Historian and Historical Marker Committee will observe the following waiting periods before a marker can be approved:
   a. Individuals: Twenty years must pass between an individual’s death and consideration by the University Historian and Historical Marker Committee for a historical marker. Living individuals, including faculty, staff, students, or donors will not be considered for recognition with a historical marker.
b. Places: Twenty years must pass from the establishment of a place before it can be considered for a historical marker.

c. Events: Twenty years must pass from the time of the event before it can be considered for a historical marker.

d. Organizations: Twenty years must pass from the organization’s founding before it can be considered for a historical marker.

5. Latitude with Approved Topics

The University Historian and Historical Marker Committee will have the latitude to adjust the focus of nominated topics to ensure that important elements are highlighted. This may be done to emphasize that topics are not necessarily being honored with a historical marker, but rather are being noted for their historical significance. This latitude is granted to ensure that challenging topics are addressed in a responsible manner.

6. Physical Marker

The Office of the Vice President for Capital Planning and Facilities shall be responsible for the design, approval of location, and installation of all Indiana University Historical Markers.

Reason For Policy

This policy is established to provide for an orderly, coordinated, well-researched, and informed practice of selecting topics for Indiana University historical markers and installing said markers university-wide. This policy is designed to establish a level of historical significance and a procedure to ensure proper vetting, research, and consultation is made before historical markers are installed.

Procedure

1. Administration

The University Historian and the Office of the President shall handle administrative duties for this program.

2. Nomination Process

a. Any member of the university community or the public may nominate a topic for consideration.

b. A nomination must be submitted via the program’s website by the annual deadline and it must include the following:

1. Contact information for the nominator.

2. The name of the topic being nominated.

3. A statement of significance.

4. Photocopies or scans of primary sources or links to digitized primary sources.

5. A reference list or bibliography.

6. Two letters of support. One must be from the relevant campus archivist and other from a dean of a relevant school.

7. A list of ways that the topic is already recognized or commemorated.

8. A list of two or three proposed locations for the historical marker.

c. The Historical Marker Committee shall make recommendations to install or not install historical markers, or request that a topic be resubmitted for consideration for the following year if historical questions need to be further investigated.

d. Topics recommended for approval by the committee shall be sent to relevant campus leadership and the President for review and to formally approve or decline the installation of a historical marker.

3. Installation and Dedication

a. Upon approval by the President, the University Historian and the Office of the President will coordinate the installation and dedication of IU historical markers.
b. Installed markers will be recorded by the Office of the President and records will be made publicly available through University Archives.

4. Editing and/or Removal of Historical Markers

The University Historian may consider the removal or editing of historical markers if new information reveals factual inaccuracy or revised interpretive significance. Should this occur, the University Historian, in consultation with the Historical Marker Committee, shall recommend that a marker remain as it is, recommend text edits, or recommend the marker be removed. Should the Committee recommend edits to the marker text or removal of the marker, the recommendation shall be sent to relevant campus leadership and the President for review and formal approval of the recommended action.

Definitions

University Historian

Appointed by the President of Indiana University, the University Historian guides policy development and best practices related to IU’s historical identity. This includes the coordination of research and public outreach, the development of curricula for IU history, the creation of historical markers, and the coordination of publications.

Historical Marker Committee

A committee appointed by the President of Indiana University, which is comprised of no more than 9 voting faculty, will assist the University Historian with evaluating nominations and make recommendations to campus leadership and the president for topics that should be commemorated with IU historical markers.

Sanctions

Any historical markers that are installed on campuses without following the procedures outlined by this policy may be removed by the Office of the Vice President for Capital Planning and Facilities at the behest of the University Historian.

Additional Contacts

| Historical significance, research, and interpretation | Dr. James Capshew  
University Historian | (812) 855-3655  
jcapshew@iu.edu |
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| Administration and Program Questions | Jeremy Hackerd  
Director of University Honors and Awards | (812) 856-2000  
jhackerd@iu.edu |
| Placement and design of historical markers | Adam Thies  
Associate Vice President, Capital Planning  
Mia Williams  
University Landscape Architect | (812) 855-8195  
(812) 855-1266  
miawilli@indiana.edu |
| Location of historical documents and records | Dina Kellams  
University Archivist | (812) 855-2323 |

History
This policy was established in 2016 and updated in October 2021 to update the program after it moved from the Office of the Bicentennial to the Office of the President.

**Related Information**

- Honorary Degrees (ACA-62)
- Institutional Naming (UA-06)