

Resolution of the University at Buffalo Council
August 3, 2020

Mary Talbert Way naming resolution

- Whereas* Putnam Way, the roadway encircling the academic spine of the University at Buffalo’s North Campus, is named after James O. Putnam; and
- whereas* Putnam helped found UB in 1846, served as the university’s fourth chancellor and was a member of the University Council for 32 years; and
- whereas* a lesser-known aspect of Putnam’s history is that he held racist views; and
- whereas* he openly expressed these views during speeches on September 7, 1860, at the Proceedings of the American Mass Meeting in Rochester, N.Y., and on February 22, 1866, at a commemoration of George Washington’s birthday in Paris, France; and
- whereas* such views are anathema to the University at Buffalo, which is deeply committed to fostering a diverse, inclusive and welcoming community; and
- whereas* the University at Buffalo Council wholeheartedly supports UB’s values and mission as a diverse, inclusive scholarly community dedicated to bringing the benefits of its research, scholarship, creative activities and educational excellence to the communities it serves; and
- whereas* Mary Talbert—an educator, suffragist and social reformer who lived in Buffalo from 1894 to her death in 1923—was one of the nation’s most prominent civil rights activists of her time; and
- whereas* Talbert, who helped launch organized civil rights activism in the United States, was integral in establishing the precursor to the NAACP and later served as the NAACP’s vice president; and
- whereas* Talbert dedicated herself to improving the lives and status of African-Americans and was a staunch supporter of women’s rights; and
- whereas* Talbert greatly contributed to the U.S. during World War I as a Red Cross Nurse on the Western Front and, after the war, returned to Europe to lecture widely on the conditions of African-Americans in the U.S.; and
- whereas* Porter Quadrangle, a residence hall in the Ellicott Complex on UB’s North Campus, is named after Peter Buell Porter; and
- whereas* Porter—a lawyer, soldier and politician who lived in Buffalo for much of his life—served as Secretary of the State of New York, a member of the U.S. Congress, regent of the University of the State of New York, and the U.S. Secretary of War; and

whereas Porter and his wife, Letitia Breckenridge, owned five enslaved African Americans, and attested as such in an affidavit to the Buffalo Town Clerk on July 28, 1820; and

whereas the UB Council embraces the opportunity to recognize the historical figures of UB and Buffalo who embody the university's mission of diversity, equity and inclusion; be it therefore

resolved that the name Porter Quadrangle be removed from the residence hall on UB's North Campus; and be it further

resolved that Putnam Way on the UB North Campus be renamed Mary Talbert Way in honor of a civil rights pioneer who worked tirelessly for the greater good; and be it further

resolved that the UB Council mark, in a formal and lasting manner, Mary Talbert's permanent place of prominence at UB and in the community; and be it further

resolved that this resolution be permanently entered into the records of the UB Council.