

Board Meeting
July 25, 2019

RENAME THE CHEZ FAMILY FOUNDATION CENTER FOR WOUNDED
VETERANS IN HIGHER EDUCATION, URBANA

Action: Rename the Chez Family Foundation Center for Wounded Veterans in Higher Education

Funding: Donor funded; no extra funding or change in funding requested

The Chancellor, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Vice President, University of Illinois with the concurrence of the appropriate administrative officers recommends approval of the renaming of the Chez Family Foundation Center for Wounded Veterans in Higher Education building to the Chez Veterans Center. The Center houses residential and non-residential support services for veterans who are pursuing degrees at the University of Illinois. Through student support services, research, and education, the activities and initiatives are intended to help veterans and service members realize their potential through obtaining a world-class education and, more broadly, improve the lives of veterans and their families.

The Chez Family Foundation Center was designed to include an accessible and accommodating residence for student-veterans, including those with physical disabilities, providing residential support while completing their degrees. In addition to the residence, the building provides academic supports, therapeutic services, and social

and wellness spaces to meet the varying needs of the student-veterans and their families, including specialized services for student-veterans who had acquired disabilities.

While the name of the Center building and the associated student-centered initiatives and services utilize the term “veteran,” the target population is broader. Consistent with the Post-9/11 GI Bill, services and activities are open to all Urbana student-veterans and all Urbana student-service-members who served after September 10, 2001, and all Urbana student-veterans who served prior to 2001. Service members include active duty, reserve, and National Guard students. Events are also open to ROTC students.

The current name of the Center poses two primary problems. When the Center was built, the intent was to provide programs and activities that would serve all student-veterans, including those with disabilities. The Center’s name was intended to convey inclusivity. Unfortunately, student feedback over the past 3 years indicates that a large number of eligible students have not accessed the services and activities because they believe that the services/activities are only for those who have a disability or are “wounded.” Second, students who did utilize services and activities consistently complained about the stigma associated with the building’s name, explaining that most military affiliated students who have visible or invisible disabilities do not want to be considered “wounded.” It is anathema to their military identity.

Renaming the Chez Family Foundation Center building reflects the need to rectify these two situations. It does not reflect a change in services/activities offered at

the Center or the target population. The principal building donor, Ron Chez has agreed that the name change is necessary to address both issues.

The Board action recommended in this item complies in all material respects with applicable State and federal laws, University of Illinois *Statutes, The General Rules Concerning University Organization and Procedure*, and Board of Trustees policies and directives.

The President of the University concurs.