

Approved by the Board of Trustees  
May 7, 2015

Board Meeting  
May 7, 2015

NAME THE WASSAJA HALL, URBANA

Action: Name the Wassaja Hall

Funding: No New Funding Required

The Chancellor, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Vice President, University of Illinois recommends for approval a proposal from the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs to name the newly constructed residence hall at the Stanley O. Ikenberry Commons, the Wassaja Hall.

Scheduled to open in fall 2016, Wassaja Hall would be named to commemorate Wassaja (Carlos Montezuma). Carlos Montezuma was born in 1866 in the Arizona territory and named Wassaja (“WAHS-ah-jah”) or “beckon” in his native Yavapai language. As a boy, he was stolen from his family and sold as a slave. He spent his early childhood on the road with an Italian photographer, and performed with Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show before starting school in Chicago.

In 1884, Montezuma was the first Native American to graduate from the University of Illinois, and later became one of the first to earn a medical degree. It is believed that Montezuma was the first U.S. graduate of color within the United States. After working for the Bureau of Indian Affairs as a reservation doctor and witnessing

widespread poverty and bureaucratic corruption, he fought tirelessly for Native American rights and citizenship. When his own Yavapai tribe faced removal from their ancestral home, Montezuma went to Washington, D.C., to fight for and finally secure their land and water rights, setting a precedent for other Indian nations. The Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation Tribal Council endorses naming the residence hall in honor of Wassaja.

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.