

**THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
REGENTS COMMUNICATION
ACTION REQUEST**

Subject: Building Name Change

Action Requested: Authorization to change name of Randall Laboratory addition

Proposed Name: Homer A. Neal Laboratory

Background:

The building formerly called East Physics was renamed by the Regents to honor Professor Harrison McAllister Randall on December 1, 1940. Since that time, an addition was built in the late 1990s connecting the Harrison M. Randall Laboratory with West Engineering, directly to its west. That addition has, for decades, been referred to informally as “New Randall.” We respectfully request to name the addition in honor of Homer A. Neal, given his remarkable legacy at the University of Michigan and his direct involvement in the construction of “New Randall.”

Homer A. Neal (1942-2018) served as U-M’s vice president for research from 1993-96, and as interim president of the university from 1996-97. He grew up in Franklin, Kentucky during the era of segregation, and earned his bachelor’s degree from Indiana University at a time when Black students were barred from entering the student union and were excluded from much of campus life. Despite these obstacles, he went on to earn his Ph.D. in Physics at the University of Michigan in 1966. Professor Neal served as Provost at SUNY Stony Brook before joining our faculty in 1987. He served as department chair from 1987-1993 and oversaw the planning and construction of “New Randall” before assuming the role of vice president for research from 1993-96, and interim president from 1996-97.

During his service as interim president, he vigorously pursued a number of initiatives, among them an effort to redefine the nation’s government-university research partnership, a reorganization of the Medical Center, and a dramatic expansion of opportunities for undergraduate students to work with faculty on research and other creative endeavors.

Professor Neal’s impact extended far beyond our campus. As a member of the National Science Board from 1980-1986, he led that organization’s first comprehensive report on undergraduate STEM education. This report led to the creation of the Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) program, which continues to provide transformative summer research opportunities for hundreds of students each year. He served on the board of directors of the Lounsbery Foundation and the Ford Motor Company. As a Regent of the Smithsonian Institution, Professor Neal served on the Council for the Smithsonian Museum of African American History. In 2016 he became the first Black American to serve as President of the 50,000-member American Physical Society.

An accomplished experimental particle physicist, Dr. Neal was part of U-M’s long history of work in spin physics, which is important because it influences everything in

nature. His early interest in spin led to work on polarization in proton-proton scattering and shaped his research agenda throughout his career. He led U-M's group on the DZero Collaboration at Fermilab, which discovered the top quark in 1995, and brought U-M into the ATLAS Collaboration at CERN, which discovered the Higgs Boson in 2012. He was universally admired for his keen judgment, kind demeanor, and true dedication to science education and outreach. Upon his death, Professor Neal's scientific and leadership contributions were recognized in obituaries in the New York Times, Physics Today, and within the University of Michigan community. Professor Neal left the Physics department a generous bequest intended to ensure that undergraduates can continue to benefit from study abroad at CERN.

Naming "New Randall" in honor of Professor Neal would provide highly visible recognition of his exceptional career as a scholar, administrator, and leader on campus and in his professional fields. There is widespread support among the natural science chairs and directors for naming "New Randall" the Homer A. Neal Laboratory.

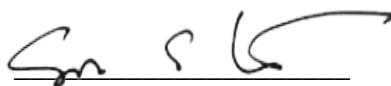
Professor Neal also modeled for our community what it means both to break through barriers to access and then to make academia more accessible to others. Honoring Professor Neal through this naming aligns with our core values of diversity, equity, and inclusion at the college and university level. It is timely and highly appropriate to celebrate the scientific achievements and visionary leadership of this eminent Black physicist, and this would be the first academic building on central campus named in honor of an African American member of the University of Michigan community.

This proposed name change would not disrupt the Harrison M. Randall name on the old physics building, and we would be honored to recognize two distinguished scholars of the department on the two buildings. Based on this criteria, we recommend that the Board of Regents approve changing the name of the Randall Laboratory Addition to Homer A. Neal Laboratory, effective immediately.

Respectfully submitted,



Anne Curzan
Dean
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts



Geoffrey S. Chatas
Executive Vice President
and Chief Financial Officer



Susan M. Collins
Provost and Executive Vice President
for Academic Affairs

May 2022