

Dear University Neighbors,

Dixie State University leaders are mindful of the many thoughts, opinions, and feelings associated with the name Dixie State University. We recognize this subject is important and personal for many, and we appreciate the concern you have for our school and students. Because the institution and community have a strong, longstanding relationship, we are reaching out directly to share our new academic focus and the recent decisions regarding our name based on the findings of a large-scale study.

Through an extensive strategic planning process, DSU has been formulating an exclusive academic direction to differentiate Dixie State from the 5,300 other institutions in the U.S. This emphasis sets up the University to be the nation's first and only open, inclusive, comprehensive, polytechnic university. This model is specifically designed to be more in line with our region's workforce needs, and DSU is committed to expanding our capacity to offer affordable, active, and meaningful educational opportunities for everyone.

Many institutions that have adopted a polytechnic focus have studied and considered changing their institutional names to accurately depict this innovative approach to learning. In preparation for this new distinction, DSU partnered with Cicero Group, an independent research firm, to study the positive and negative impacts of continuing to include Dixie in the University's name. The experiences and opinions of more than 3,000 stakeholders from our region, state, and recruiting areas were measured. When asked what factors are the most important to the future success of the University, the top four responses were academic reputation of the University, making the University a welcoming/inclusive place for all, enabling students to obtain jobs after graduation, and growing DSU's reputation as a STEM-focused polytechnic institution.

The research demonstrates that strong support for the name remains among many. In fact, 62% of Southwestern Utah and 46% of Greater Utah believe there will be greater brand appeal if the name remains. However, despite this great appreciation for our name locally, key stakeholders are being negatively impacted. The study shows that 22% of recent graduates looking for jobs outside of Utah have had an employer express concern with the name Dixie on their résumé; 42% of respondents from our recruiting region and 22% of respondents from Utah say the name makes them less likely to attend DSU; and 52% of recent alumni who live outside of the state feel the name has a negative impact on the brand. Furthermore, 17% of our community members, 38% of Utahns, 52% of people outside of the state, and 47% of recent alumni who live outside of the state feel uncomfortable wearing Dixie State apparel outside of Utah.

For these reasons, the DSU Cabinet, University Council, Staff Association Board, Faculty Senate, Student Executive Council, and Board of Trustees are all recommending a name change to the Utah Board of Higher Education. Although we deeply believe this is in the best interest of our institution, students, and alumni, we share in the profound pride, love, and reverence for the local meaning of this name. We understand that any movement to change the name of Dixie State University could lead community members and supporters to distance themselves from the University. While this prospect concerns and saddens us, we have a deep obligation to help foster our students' success.

Although there are differing opinions regarding Dixie in the University's name, there is one widely accepted reality: the name Dixie has more than one meaning. We firmly understand and cherish the locally embraced

sentiment of the word Dixie that represents our heritage. In honor of our founders' trailblazing spirit of service, dedication, and sacrifice, our institution has proudly carried the Dixie moniker for many years. However, understanding that a strong brand name is typically embraced by nearly 100% of stakeholders, the data clearly indicate that the negative associations and confusion surrounding the name Dixie far exceed the acceptable margin and will impose unnecessary difficulties on our campus community into the future.

While educating a smaller, local audience in the past, the name Dixie appropriately served our students, faculty, staff, and alumni. However, as the institution has grown from having a regional to a national presence, the name is becoming increasingly problematic for our campus community. We fully support the regional use of the word Dixie and the many local businesses and schools that proudly use the moniker. In that spirit, and with the support of the City of St. George, we are in the process of applying to have the D on the Hill and the Dixie Sugarloaf at Pioneer Park be included on the National Register of Historic Places. Our goal is to ensure these landmarks remain honored symbols for our entire community. We plan to use the D-light capabilities to celebrate not only DSU accomplishments, but local high school state championships, holidays, traditions, initiatives, and more. Also, our recent athletic rebrand from the Red Storm to the Trailblazers was specifically designed to better honor our heritage, and will continue to do so as we proudly retain the Trailblazer athletic brand.

Our campus means many things to many people, but at our core, we are here to educate students. As an open-enrollment public university, it is our mission to help our students thrive, and our name must thrive alongside them. If you have further questions, please take a moment and learn more at [dixie.edu/namechange](http://dixie.edu/namechange), where we have provided Cicero's full report along with answers to frequently asked questions.

Thank you for your support as we work to elevate our offerings, enhance our students' educational experiences, meet area workforce demands, and help our students reach their full potential.



Richard B. Williams  
*DSU President*  
*President's Cabinet Chair*  
*University Council Chair*



Penny Mills  
*Student Body President*



David Clark  
*Board of Trustees Chair*



William Christensen  
*Faculty Senate President*



Jon Gibb  
*Staff Association President*