

Hencken withdraws name from consideration of Douglas Hall renaming

Corryn Brock, Editor-in-Chief

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Former Eastern President Louis V. Hencken has requested his name be withdrawn from the list of names being considered by the Naming Committee as potential name replacements for Douglas Hall.

Hencken said he was honored to be considered but felt that another person on the list would be a better choice for Douglas Hall to be renamed after, adding that with the accolades he already has, someone else deserved to be honored.

“I look at some of the things that I’ve said I have named after me and I just thought that maybe the time is right to name a building after somebody else whose name was on that list,” Hencken said.

Currently, there are three awards named after Hencken: the Louis V. Hencken Alumni Service Award, the Louis V. Hencken Housing Service Scholarship and the Lou and Mary Kay Hencken Scholarship. Additionally, Eastern’s chapter of the National Residence Hall Honorary is named in his honor.

He said he came to the decision to request his name be withdrawn after reading the Black Student Reunion 2020 Commemorative Book and seeing names he felt the building should be named after.

Hencken shared part of the letter he wrote to University President David Glassman after making his decision with the *Daily Eastern News*:



Photo courtesy of The Keep

Former University President Louis V. Hencken

“...After much consideration, I feel that at this point in EIU’s history, it would be appropriate to honor a person that celebrates the diversity of our campus community. A rich history is certainly reflected in our current building names, and this change would provide an even more complete picture of our university values. Therefore, I respectfully request that my name be removed from consideration...”

Hencken received much support on social media from former Eastern students:

“I think when most people in housing think of EIU – they immediately think of Louis,” Jill Bender Dino said. “He would be an amazing choice!”

“Truly is the kindest man and had a deep love for the University and its students,” Dana Wulff Balaz said. “Had the honor to work with him while in graduate school.”

“Hencken deserves a building named in his honor. He was director of housing when I was an EIU student and President when two of my children were attending EIU,” Rick Jones said. “I saw him often at honors functions. Honor him for his service to EIU.”

Hencken graduated from Eastern in 1967 and was a member of Beta Sigma Psi, Gamma Delta and Circle K International while an undergraduate student.

Following graduation, Hencken began his career at Eastern as a residence hall counselor at Douglas Hall, moving through the ranks as associate and assistant director of housing, director of housing, associate vice president for student affairs, vice president for student affairs, interim athletic director, eventually leading to him being named university president in 2001, serving as president until 2007.

Hencken was the only living person being considered by the Naming Committee.

Six other individuals are being considered, including former Illinois Governor Edward Coles, former student athlete and Tuskegee Airman Captain Charles B. Hall, community members who assisted students with housing Ona and Kenneth Norton, Eastern’s first Black student Zella Powell and former life sciences professor and Director of Afro-American Studies William Ridgeway.

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