

Mascot Steering Committee Final Report Recommendations to President Robin Holmes-Sullivan

July 2024

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Executive Summary

This report responds to President Robin Holmes-Sullivan’s request that the Mascot Steering Committee lead a thorough process to engage our community in a conversation around the Pioneer mascot. Over the course of the last seven months, the Mascot Steering Committee has taken on this charge fully and thoughtfully.

As twenty-one Lewis & Clark community members representing alumni, trustees, faculty, staff, and students from the College of Arts and Sciences, the Law School, and the Graduate School of Education and Counseling, our group engaged deeply with the question of whether the Pioneer functions well as a mascot for our community today.

This task was accomplished by (1) surveying academic literature on mascots, (2) conducting nearly 40 Community Dialogues, (3) undertaking a survey of our on-campus community and worldwide alumni—sent to nearly 29,000 individuals and garnering a 24 percent response rate (44 percent of students, 53 percent of faculty and staff, and 21 percent of alumni), (4) convening our committee many times to analyze and synthesize the quantitative and qualitative data, as well as to understand its implications for Lewis & Clark moving forward.

Our conclusion based on these efforts is (1) that a good mascot should function as an accepted symbol around which members of the college community can rally, and (2) that the Pioneer is not meeting this standard.

As part of our commitment to transparency for the Lewis & Clark community, this report explains the committee’s process and decision making. We document below how the evidence that emerged from our community survey shaped our recommendations. Most notably, in that survey only 38 percent of respondents agreed that “The ‘Pioneer’ is an appropriate mascot for Lewis & Clark College today”—18 percent of students, 28 percent of faculty and staff, and 45 percent of alumni. Among current student-athletes, those most connected to the mascot, only 51 percent—barely more than half—agreed.

Additionally, it was also notable to us that overwhelming majorities of all groups (89 percent of students, 82 percent of faculty and staff, and 74 percent of alumni) believe it is important for the college to have a mascot that current students are proud of, yet only 18 percent of current students report feeling supportive of the Pioneer.

Drawing on this and other data, this report details why we believe a new mascot will allow Lewis & Clark as a whole to benefit from a greater sense of pride and school spirit. In making our recommendations, we acknowledge the ongoing importance of thoughtfully engaging with and including people who have fond memories of and

connections with the “Pioneers.” We hope and believe that, done well, the process of adopting and embracing a new mascot will strengthen the Lewis & Clark community over time.

The Purpose of a Mascot

During our discovery process, we spent time learning what the academic literature says about the purpose of athletics mascots and what a good mascot should do—especially in the construction of personal and group identity.

This literature identifies two important functions of a mascot that, as the data cited below indicate, the Pioneer does not fulfill:

- A good mascot should function as an accepted symbol around which the college can rally.
- A good mascot needs to be intrinsically inclusive.

The literature also points to as-yet-untapped opportunities that a new mascot will allow us to benefit from:

- A good mascot is one that a college feels comfortable representing directly in images and logos, and potentially in animated and/or costumed forms.
- A good mascot creates opportunities for branding and merchandising.

For a post-secondary institution, a mascot will be most effective if it is both distinctive and appealing to potential and current students, as well as to alumni and donors. Although a mascot is only a part of the way a school communicates its identity, an institution benefits most when a mascot is not at odds with other qualities or aspects of that identity.

Academic Literature Consulted

Tarver, Erin C. *The I in Team: Sports Fandom and the Reproduction of Identity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Billings, Andrew C. and Jason Edward Black. *Mascot Nation: The Controversy over Native American Representations in Sports*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018.

Wann, Daniel L. “Understanding the Positive Social Psychological Benefits of Sport Team Identification: The Team Identification–Social Psychological Health Model.” *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice* 10 (2006): 272-296.

History of the Pioneer Mascot

According to Martha Montague's *Lewis and Clark College, 1867–1967*, on October 13, 1942, shortly after the college moved to Portland and changed its name to Lewis & Clark, the student newspaper announced that a new name for their publication was to be chosen by student vote. The student newspaper began publishing as the *Lewis & Clark College Pioneer Log*. (Previously, the student newspaper had been *The Orange Peel*.) In 1946, the football team followed the newspaper's precedent and took the name *Pioneers*.

The only visual representation of the Pioneer mascot was a short-lived character named Pioneer Pete who appeared in illustrations and in human form during the mid-1950s. According to "Many-Faced Pete Acts as Mascot," an article that appeared in the *Pioneer Log* on May 7, 1954, the Pioneer Pete character was originally designed by a Lewis & Clark undergraduate "as a jolly, good natured fellow, with a large toothy grin, and dressed in the true pioneer fashion." The student council directed that Pioneer Pete should be "an extremely versatile fellow . . . free to change personalities as he desired or as demanded by the occasion." Aside from this brief period in which Pioneer Pete was used, there has been no visual representation of the Pioneer. As mascots function as symbols, this visual absence is unusual.

Recently, some student groups have been moving away from using "Pioneer" as part of the name of their organizations and activities. In 2022, the students renamed the student newspaper to *The Mossy Log*. As the editor-in-chief wrote in the September 16, 2022 issue:

Last academic year we had many discussions about our name and the legacy of the word "pioneer." . . . After much community input from our survey, our editorial meetings and an Affinity Leader Luncheon we hosted, the decision was clear. . . . "Pioneer" had to go. . . .

The students involved in the decision were forthright about the reason for dispensing with Pioneer in the name of their publication: "it upholds the colonial legacy."

Similarly, the peer-led undergraduate mental health support system, launched in 2021 as the Pio Support Network, has chosen to drop "Pio" and now is known as the Palatine Support Network. The College of Arts and Sciences Admissions Office, seeking to remove a potential hurdle to recruiting students, has also changed the name of a key online tool for incoming students from the Pioneer Portal to the Lewis & Clark Portal.

Our Newfoundland dog logo

Nearly two decades ago, when the Department of Physical Education and Athletics sought a visual representation “that elicited emotion from the audience ... something that was active, proud, and suggestive of victory,” they determined that “no pictorial representations of a literal ‘Pioneer’” conveyed these characteristics. Instead, on April 22, 2008, they unveiled a new logo of Newfoundland dog, inspired by Seaman, Meriwether Lewis’s dog, a 2008-2009 webpage that is now archived at <https://tinyurl.com/whafrm2y>). Subsequently, actual Newfoundland dogs belonging to Lewis & Clark fans have appeared at various times at our sporting events. The Newfoundland logo continues to be used, including on Lewis & Clark merchandise, usually with the name “Pio.”

Pio

The term “Pios” is also in current use to refer to Lewis & Clark community members. Some individuals and groups use “Pios” and “Pioneers” interchangeably. Others opt for “Pio” and “Pios” as a preferable alternative to “Pioneer” and “Pioneers.” Still others reject “Pio” as linked to “Pioneer.”

Putting the Pioneer in Context

Unlike a number of professional, amateur, and school teams across the nation, we do not have a mascot that is based on a derogatory term or stereotype. Yet, as the discussion of qualitative data included below indicates, a consideration of our mascot is made particularly complicated by the variety of connotations—some positive and some negative, depending on one’s point of view—associated with “pioneer,” used as either a noun or a verb.

Parsing these contradictory connotations is further complicated by our school name. In conversations in recent years throughout our campus and alumni communities, in the mascot survey responses, in media coverage about this process, and in our own committee discussions, there has been concern about the inability to decouple “pioneer” from “Lewis & Clark.”

The committee recognizes that for some community members, as well as for prospective students, the combination of our school name and the Pioneer mascot may be especially problematic. We recognize the importance of acknowledging the complicated legacy inherent in the institutional name Lewis & Clark, and we hope a change of mascot will be part of a deep and ongoing engagement with the legacy of Lewis and Clark as individuals, and of the expedition they led and its impact on Native people.

While it is beyond the purview of the committee to make specific recommendations about what forms this engagement will take, it is clear from the survey results and the

other factors we considered that merely changing the mascot without also engaging thoughtfully with this legacy will fall short of the paramount goal of building a more welcoming and inclusive community.

Engaging Our Community

Community Dialogues

During the 2023–24 academic year, Lewis & Clark’s Community Dialogues team hosted 39 sessions about the Pioneer mascot (both in-person and online) for students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, and trustees, with affiliations from all three campuses.

The goal of Community Dialogues is to build our capacity to listen, speak, and learn with each other about topics central to our collective wellbeing, even when those topics are contentious. While the Community Dialogues were confidential and not used in our decision-making, it was especially useful for us to learn that interactions within specific Community Dialogue sessions helped participants with different feelings about the Pioneer mascot understand each other’s perspectives. The Community Dialogue model also helped the committee in our own process, including providing a model for how to interact with each other when we were in disagreement.

Community Survey

The Mascot Steering Committee created an online survey to gather insights (in the form of both quantitative and qualitative data) from students, faculty, staff, and alumni, across all three campuses. The survey consisted of five sections.

Section 1: Participants were asked to respond to thirteen statements relevant to the suitability of the Pioneer mascot. The responses were scored on a five-point Likert scale. Six statements were phrased in a manner supportive of the current mascot, six statements were phrased in a manner opposing the current mascot, and one statement was phrased neutrally.

Section 2: Participants were asked to respond to what the committee considered the central evaluative statement: “The ‘Pioneer’ is an appropriate mascot for Lewis & Clark College today,” again scored on a five-point Likert scale.

Section 3: Participants were asked to enter what they believe are the three most prominent values of Lewis & Clark College.

Section 4: The fourth section allowed respondents to submit a free-text/open-ended response of up to 1500 characters, if they had additional comments on the issue.

Section 5: The final section collected L&C relevant demographic information from participants.

The survey on the Pioneer mascot was distributed via email on January 17, 2024 to all current Lewis & Clark students, faculty, and staff, and to all alumni with active emails in our alumni database. (Some alumni who did not receive the survey initially because there was no active email for them in our database subsequently contacted Lewis & Clark indicating their desire to participate in the survey. Their emails were added to allow their participation.) The survey remained open for three weeks; email reminders were sent prior to the survey closing on February 7, 2024. In total, 28,759 people were invited to participate in the survey, and we received 7,044 total responses (this 24.5 percent overall response rate is supported in academic literature as being within the typical and acceptable range for a survey of this kind).

See the response rate by demographic group in the table below:

Mascot Survey Response Rate by Demographic Group				
L&C Affiliation	Count Invited	Count Responded	Response Rate	Percentage of Total Respondents
All Students	3,550	1,570	44.2%	22.3%
CAS Students	2,156	1,061	49.2%	15.1%
GSEC Students	714	248	34.7%	3.5%
LAW Students	680	261	38.4%	3.7%
Faculty or Staff	960	513	53.4%	7.3%
Alumni	24,249	4,961	20.5%	70.4%
Total	28,759	7,044	24.5%	100.0%

The survey's composition and content were indebted to the efforts and generosity of peer institutions that had previously undergone their own mascot evaluations.

Results: Quantitative Data

Our analysis included all the quantitative data. Key findings came from the responses to the following statements:

Statement: *"The 'Pioneer' is an appropriate mascot for Lewis & Clark College today."*

Only 18 percent of student respondents agreed with this central statement. Only 38 percent of all respondents agree with it. Even among alumni, who statistically showed more affinity for the mascot, fewer than half (45 percent) agreed with the central statement.

Survey Results - Central Statement The “Pioneer” is an appropriate mascot for Lewis & Clark College today.				
Group	Disagree	Agree	Undecided/ No Opinion	N
Overall	41%	38%	22%	7035
Current Students	66%	18%	16%	1569
Faculty or Staff	48%	28%	24%	512
Alumni	32%	45%	23%	4954

Statement: *“The name ‘Pioneers’ could be offensive to some people.”*

A majority of 61 percent of all respondents (79 percent of students, 74 percent of faculty and staff, and 53 percent of alumni) agreed with this statement.

Statement: *“Lewis & Clark does not use depictions of pioneers in its logos, imagery, and branding. We should have a mascot that we are comfortable representing.”*

A larger majority of 70 percent of all respondents (85 percent of students, 76 percent of faculty and staff, and 64 percent of alumni) agreed with this statement.

Statement: *“It is important for the college to have a mascot that current students are proud of.”*

An even larger majority of 78 percent of all respondents (89 percent of students, 82 percent of faculty and staff, and 74 percent of alumni) agreed with this statement

Based on the quantitative data, the Pioneer does not fulfill what respondents indicated should be the central functions of a Lewis & Clark mascot: one that we are comfortable representing visually and one that current students are proud of.

Results: Qualitative Data

Values

The survey asked respondents to share what they believed were the three most prominent values of Lewis & Clark College. The word cloud below represents the hundred most common responses. Of these, the ten most common were: community, inclusive, exploration, diversity, curiosity, integrity, quality education, innovation, global, and social justice.



Lewis & Clark Values
All Survey Respondents



Open-ended comments

The survey also invited respondents to provide additional comments or clarifications related to their individual perspectives about the mascot. We were heartened by Lewis & Clark community members taking the time to offer so many thoughtful responses. A total of 3,115 participants (44% of all survey participants; 56% of students, 42% of faculty/staff, and 47% of alumni who responded) chose to provide some input on this question, generating over 220,000 words in response. Themes that emerged for retaining or changing the mascot include:

RETAIN:

The current mascot represents the “pioneering spirit,” pursuit of knowledge, and emphasis on global engagement, which are fundamental values to Lewis & Clark College.

RETAIN:

Pioneers should be more effectively recontextualized to more strongly emphasize the term’s positive meaning.

CHANGE:

The current mascot acts as a barrier to recruiting and maintaining a diverse and inclusive student body, staff, and faculty.

CHANGE:

The current mascot’s link to settler colonialism and Indigenous oppression make it an inappropriate mascot for the college.

RETAIN:

The current mascot is important to the history and tradition of the college, and many L&C community members express pride in being a Pioneer.

RETAIN:

To change the mascot would be to capitulate to an overly sensitive political climate and wrongly attempt to “erase” history.

CHANGE:

The current mascot does not engender school spirit, and many community members feel uncomfortable promoting or representing the mascot.

CHANGE:

The college’s mascot should be intrinsically more inclusive and unifying.

Looking Ahead: Opportunities for Community, Connection, and Inclusion

Drawing on the breadth of community input we considered and the depth of our own conversations regarding that input, the committee wants to acknowledge what it means that the Pioneer mascot evokes such strong feelings for many community members. While the particular feelings vary greatly, we recognize they all stem from a deep attachment to this institution.

We acknowledge that we should have communicated more proactively with alumni prior to our survey. We believe that done earlier, more comprehensive communication about why we were undertaking this evaluation would have been beneficial.

Moving forward, it is important to recognize that for some alums, students, and other members of our community, the Pioneer mascot is—and may continue to be—associated with cherished memories and positive connotations. For others, concern about the displacement of Native Americans has always shaped their feelings about terms and images like the Pioneer. Still other community members may be looking anew at symbols and myths that they might not have questioned in the past but which they are now reevaluating.

As the administration (along with staff and faculty) continue in the ongoing work to make this community as welcoming and inclusive as possible for students, staff, faculty, alums, and guests, it is important to engage these varied perspectives. We want the adoption of a new mascot to be a win for the entire Lewis & Clark community.

Over the past months, the members of this committee have learned a tremendous amount from each other, from our process and discussions, from the quantitative and

qualitative data, and from other sources we have consulted. While our personal views have varied, we have worked together respectfully and collegially as a committee to discern the feedback from the larger Lewis & Clark community. Collectively, we stand behind the process and recommendations of this report. In this way, we have experienced exactly what our institution is all about: thinking deeply, understanding different perspectives, and learning together. We hope that the next steps in the process continue in this spirit, with the goal of making our community more welcoming and inclusive.

Conclusion and Recommendations

We believe that developing a new mascot offers us a valuable opportunity to rebrand in a way that closely builds engagement, aligns with institutional values, and strengthens community identity.

Our discussions lead us to make the following recommendations to move this process forward:

- We recognize that retiring the Pioneer mascot and developing a new mascot will take time. However we suggest the process move as expeditiously as possible.
- Lewis & Clark should continue to learn from other colleges that have made mascot changes, benefiting from knowledge of their challenges and successes.
- The communications department could take the lead on developing an internal and external communications plan to connect with students, faculty, staff, alumni, donors, the media, and the general public about the retirement of the Pioneer mascot. The communications team will need to collaborate with athletics, advancement, and alumni and parent engagement to implement the plan.
- There will be an interim period before a new mascot is chosen and launched, and Lewis & Clark will need to plan for this interim as well as for the process of choosing and launching the new mascot.
- Lewis & Clark would benefit from being transparent about the process for choosing a new mascot that current students are proud of and that we can represent visually as a part of our brand and merchandising. While defining that process is beyond the purview of the committee, we will note that the literature suggests a good mascot is generally developed “from the ground up.”

- The adoption of a new mascot would ideally be part of larger, ongoing efforts to make Lewis & Clark more spirited and more welcoming to all. These efforts should:
 - Engage with the complex historical meanings of the name Lewis & Clark.
 - Involve partnering with Native American individuals and advisors within and beyond the Lewis & Clark community, to help guide this and other efforts.
 - Model ways to listen across differences, to learn from and with each other, and to work together to strengthen our community. Deepening our understanding is ultimately the work that defines Lewis & Clark as an institution.

Thank you for entrusting the members of the committee with this charge. In the time during which we engaged in this process, we have appreciated the opportunity to learn from each other and from our community. We look forward to the ways in which Lewis & Clark will build on our committee's work in the months and years to come.

Appendix

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Responses to Statements by Demographic Group

Notes: In the table below, strongly agree and agree responses are rolled up into the Agree category, and strongly disagree and disagree responses are rolled up into the Disagree category. The table is sorted by Overall Mean Score (high-to-low), which would suggest higher level of agreement with statements at the top of the table.

Mean Score: The scores reflect points awarded based on the following scale:

- 5 = Strongly Agree
- 4 = Agree
- 3 = Undecided
- 2 = Disagree
- 1 = Strongly Disagree

Mean scores do not include participants who selected No Opinion/Indifferent or did not answer the question. In general, a higher score (above 3.00) indicates that a group more strongly agreed with the central statement and are generally in favor of keeping the mascot. A lower score (below 3.00) indicates that a group more strongly disagreed with the central statement and are generally in favor of changing the mascot. If a group were to have a score of 3.00 by this metric, they would be deemed completely neutral.

Statement - Group	Agree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Mean Score
It is important for the college to have a mascot that current students are proud of.	-	-	-	-
Overall	78.0%	6.0%	16.0%	4.07
Students	89.3%	1.8%	8.9%	4.41
Staff and Faculty	82.2%	2.5%	15.3%	4.22
Alumni	74.0%	7.6%	18.4%	3.94
Lewis & Clark does not use depictions of pioneers in its logos, imagery, or branding. We should have a mascot that we feel comfortable representing.	-	-	-	-
Overall	69.6%	8.7%	21.7%	3.88
Students	84.7%	3.8%	11.4%	4.27
Staff and Faculty	75.9%	6.3%	17.8%	4.05
Alumni	64.1%	10.5%	25.3%	3.73
"Pioneer" is a positive description of a person.	-	-	-	-
Overall	55.2%	17.9%	27.0%	3.53
Students	34.2%	32.1%	33.7%	2.99
Staff and Faculty	47.5%	17.5%	35.1%	3.37
Alumni	62.6%	13.4%	24.0%	3.72
The name "Pioneers" could be offensive to some people.	-	-	-	-
Overall	60.5%	23.0%	16.5%	3.49
Students	78.7%	11.1%	10.2%	4.03
Staff and Faculty	74.4%	9.8%	15.9%	3.88
Alumni	53.4%	28.1%	18.5%	3.28
The name "Pioneers" does not effectively represent the diverse communities of Lewis & Clark.	-	-	-	-
Overall	48.1%	31.0%	20.9%	3.25
Students	70.5%	14.6%	15.0%	3.90
Staff and Faculty	53.4%	22.1%	24.5%	3.49
Alumni	40.4%	37.1%	22.5%	3.03
The name "Pioneers" represents a part of the region's history that is not consistent with what Lewis & Clark College should represent.	-	-	-	-
Overall	44.3%	36.5%	19.3%	3.10
Students	68.3%	16.4%	15.3%	3.84
Staff and Faculty	51.9%	25.4%	22.7%	3.37
Alumni	35.9%	43.9%	20.2%	2.84

Statement - Group	Agree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Mean Score
The name "Pioneers" does not effectively represent the core values of the college.	-	-	-	-
Overall	39.5%	34.4%	26.0%	3.07
Students	63.0%	15.4%	21.6%	3.73
Staff and Faculty	43.1%	26.4%	30.5%	3.27
Alumni	31.7%	41.3%	27.0%	2.84
The Pioneer mascot creates a common identity between past and present students, faculty, and staff.	-	-	-	-
Overall	39.1%	35.6%	25.3%	3.06
Students	22.7%	54.8%	22.5%	2.50
Staff and Faculty	31.4%	41.3%	27.3%	2.84
Alumni	45.1%	29.0%	25.9%	3.25
Lewis & Clark College would not exist without the work of pioneers, and we should honor that legacy.	-	-	-	-
Overall	35.8%	37.6%	26.7%	2.99
Students	17.4%	55.5%	27.1%	2.42
Staff and Faculty	24.1%	42.5%	33.3%	2.75
Alumni	42.8%	31.4%	25.8%	3.19
We should honor the legacy of the Lewis & Clark expedition, and the Pioneer mascot is an appropriate way to do that.	-	-	-	-
Overall	35.4%	42.0%	22.6%	2.91
Students	14.9%	66.7%	18.4%	2.19
Staff and Faculty	24.3%	48.8%	26.9%	2.63
Alumni	43.0%	33.5%	23.5%	3.17
Other colleges have changed their mascots, and therefore, it is time for Lewis & Clark to do the same.	-	-	-	-
Overall	33.8%	39.7%	26.5%	2.88
Students	59.2%	18.1%	22.7%	3.64
Staff and Faculty	35.1%	33.3%	31.6%	3.05
Alumni	25.6%	47.2%	27.2%	2.62
Tradition is important at Lewis & Clark, and the Pioneer mascot is important to the history of the college.	-	-	-	-
Overall	33.8%	44.0%	22.3%	2.86
Students	17.0%	63.7%	19.3%	2.30
Staff and Faculty	28.6%	45.2%	26.2%	2.74
Alumni	39.6%	37.6%	22.8%	3.06
Changing the mascot would be an inappropriate response to the pressures of political correctness.	-	-	-	-
Overall	33.9%	49.6%	16.5%	2.78
Students	18.5%	67.8%	13.7%	2.23
Staff and Faculty	22.4%	56.5%	21.2%	2.48
Alumni	39.9%	43.2%	16.9%	2.99