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Students, faculty respond to Westminster University name change



By Vanessa Eveleth and Zidia Gibson on September 19, 2022



Westminster College banners with the institution's current branding hang in Richer Commons Sept. 19. The name change from Westminster College to Westminster University – which will take full effect in Fall 2023, according to President Dobkin in an email

announcement – will require “a really big shift in name and branding,” according to art professor Matt Kruback. Image description: Two Westminster College banners, copper and dark purple, and a flower basket hang from a light post in Richer Commons.

CORRECTION: A previous version of this story published misspelled Django Clarke. This error is now fixed.

Westminster College will become Westminster University as of Fall 2023, according to a [social media and email announcement](#) from President Beth Dobkin, Monday, Sept. 19.

“I am incredibly proud to share that our Board of Trustees unanimously approved Westminster College becoming Westminster University,” President Dobkin said in the email statement.

The name change notice comes after President Dobkin spoke at the Florence J. Gillmor Hall grand opening and informed the audience of the decision last Friday.

“Becoming Westminster University honors our past while showcasing our strengths and trajectory as a small, comprehensive institution, one that offers students boundless opportunities with a network of support,” President Dobkin said [in the video](#) announcing the name change to the Westminster community.

First-year computer science major Shreeya Maskey said she was not expecting the name change, but can see how it makes sense.

“For me personally, ‘college’ would just [mean] liberal arts college, and usually liberal arts colleges are the ones that just provide Bachelor of Arts,” Maskey said. “But here we have, as it said in the video, we have like, Bachelor of Science or nursing and stuff, and that’s something a university would provide.”

Art professor Matt Kruback said he’s worked at Westminster for 13 years, and isn’t necessarily surprised by the announcement.

“There have been talks about changing the name for eight or nine years, I think we heard it in past administrations,” Kruback said. “I think the rationale seems solid [...] I think it would take a really big shift in name and branding.”

Kruback said he’s optimistic about the name change, and what it might provide Westminster.

“I’d like to see what happens as the full change progresses,” Kruback said. “I know Westminster College as Westminster College. I know that we’ve existed here as that for a long time. But I absolutely can see the rationale for why Westminster University makes sense in terms of how we brand ourselves regionally and nationwide.”

Brooke Scudder, a senior literature media writing major, said she heard about the name change secondhand.

“I guess I can understand the move, [...] colleges are usually like, smaller parts of a university, but I’m not quite sure how it will really affect me per chance because I am graduating,” Scudder said.

The Westminster website has a [FAQ page](#) for community members who might have questions about the name change, the process and the impact for current and graduating students. According to the announcement, the FAQ page will be updated to keep the Westminster community informed.

University distinction will not change Westminster’ size, campus culture or core commitments, according to President Dobkin.

“It will change how people come to find us, come to know us and recognize in Westminster the outstanding opportunities that we offer,” President Dobkin said in the announcement.

Senior finance major Django Clarke said the switch to Westminster University will be a good change and might make the institution sound more professional.

“I think there’ll be the same experience overall,” Clarke said. “Maybe, [the change] gets [Westminster’s] name out there to the crowd [...] and brings Westminster into more conversations with different people.”

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